Men in the Picture

Representations of Men and Masculinities in Egyptian Cinema since 1952

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This study explores the diverse representations of Egyptian men and masculinities in commercial Egyptian cinema. Through a critical analysis of images of men, the research uncovers general assumptions about men and what is deemed masculine. It analyzes different masculine performances as they are brought by different actors. A star analysis forms an integral part of this study as stars constitute an essential element in the construction of meaning and of gender identities. Through an analysis of female masculinities, the study furthermore disentangles masculinity from biological men. This research is interdisciplinary, engaging with postcolonial, film and gender theories, while exploring a new angle to a starting field of social research on Egypt, the Arab world and the Middle East and North Africa.

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provided me with fresh insights and the necessary uplifting drinks, dinners, bike rides through Cairo and many moments of laughter. It has been a hell of a ride, and I am grateful to all those I have had the privilege to meet.

Transliteration

The transliteration of titles and names in the text is based on the transliteration used in the International Journal of Middle East Studies. I have opted not to transliterate the initial *hamza* (or the initial *qāf* when it is pronounced as *hamza*), nor do I use diacritics in the text when referring to names, place names, titles of books or films (with the exception of *'ayn* and *hamza* in the middle of a word). In the bibliography I did use diacritics. Whenever an English translation exists or when an Arabic word is common (e.g. mufti), I will use this term instead of a proper transliteration. Titles of films are only transliterated the first time they are mentioned (or if the title reappears in another chapter) followed by their English translation. Afterwards I only use the English translation of the title. When referencing to film titles for the first time, I include the name of the director together with the year in which the film was first screened.

For certain names or words I have opted to use an Egyptian pronunciation when transliterating, for example Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir, to indicate the Egyptian pronunciation of the Arabic letter *jīm* as the English 'g' as in 'garden'. Other examples are the transliteration of vowels in titles, since Egyptian does not use diphthongs like *aw or ay*, but rather pronounces them as a long 'o' or 'e' (as in the English 'more' and the French 'café'). Notable exceptions to the transliteration system are the names of the famous directors Youssef Chahine and Henry Barakat (whose names are commonly written as such).

Contents

Introduction

Before I started with this research back in 2010 I was pondering one question over and over again in my mind: why is it that whenever Western media talk about 'immigrants' and more specifically about 'Muslims', they have a tendency to write about young Muslim men in terms of a 'problem'? Back in 2009, Belgium (and its neighboring countries) was battered with talk about integration, Islam in Europe, the problem that Muslims (read: young, unemployed immigrant men) posed. I wondered in how far these discourses were influenced by class differences and a white middle class angst of losing their hegemony defining what a 'real' Flemish identity is. One such example of a white middle class woman in fear presented itself to me during an Italian language course I took back in 2006. It was about foreigners in Belgium and what we thought about integration and whether foreigners 'should learn our language'? It should be noted that Belgium has three official languages; which one is 'ours' anyway? It was clear from the group (all white and Flemish) which language we were talking about. The woman – a middle-aged lawyer working in Brussels – stated that she was appalled and, frankly, a bit scared when walking down one of Brussels' main commercial thoroughfares 'to hear all those different languages'. I personally could not withhold myself from commenting and said this remark was outright racist.

I was still young back then, and now I realize that this woman's remark – although I still believe it is racist – is actually not so out-of-place as I thought it was. Looking at Belgian news from a distance, with their frequent reports of the violence inflicted on Belgian citizens, the woman's attitude towards foreigners was not at all that strange and seemed to be informed by a prejudiced mediated image of the 'problematic immigrant male'. This idea was reconfirmed to me when in 2012 a graduate student from the art academy in Brussels made a short film from her daily walk between her home and her school, through a neighborhood where mostly immigrants live. Her point in the film was not to draw attention to problematic foreign men; her

interest was to show that – as a young independent woman in Brussels – life was not easy as she was constantly harassed by passers-by. The media, however, were quick to note the 'obvious fact' that most of the men catcalling or outright insulting her were foreign. Later, the Flemish television (paid for by tax money!) made a documentary with two gay men and a hidden camera, walking hand in hand and looking for parks and places where they would be sure to find some troubled young (Muslim) men. When asked about their experience on a talkshow, they stated they felt threatened and frightened at a certain point. Without condoning the young men's insults and attitude towards a gay couple (or the young woman in the earlier film), I do not believe these men's film made any other point but to stigmatize the immigrant community and specifically young Muslim men.

The point was clear and the stereotype of the young Arab male reaffirmed as misogynist and homophobic men, not at all integrated into our democratic Western culture. For me, however, these media reactions to the first film point at one thing only: their ability to construct an image of marginalized men as problematic in order to reaffirm the hegemony of the middle class white heterosexual male, cultured and understanding towards both women and gays. But it also shows something else, a deeper, underlying problem in our Western culture. Why do these young men feel marginalized in the first place? Why do they 'hate' women or gays? I started wondering what could be the reason behind their performance of their 'immigrant' identity. When considering their general absence in popular television serials – apart from the occasional 'good' Moroccan or Turk who barely shows any cultural markers – I slowly started to understand these young men's perceived need to identify themselves with a constructed 'immigrant' identity that makes them special in their own way and creates respect among their own community. Is it so strange for young adolescent men to look for their own identity, to construct their personal selves in a society that anyway seems to favor individualism and encourages a man to take care of himself and others around him?

But then another question popped up: why women and gay men? Why do these marginalized (and often young) men supposedly target women and gay men? On the one hand, the media suggested that in

'our' culture, we respect women and gay men. On the other hand, this suggestion means that 'our' culture considers both women and gay men to be 'different', as an '*Other*' to the white, middle class, heterosexual male as norm. If that is the norm, and these marginalized men are unable to attain that due to their race and class, it seems that their way to assert a stronger identity and create respect among their peers, is to hit on those groups they perceive as either subordinated or more marginalized than they themselves are. Although these are strong assumptions, and perhaps I should not make them without studying the effects of mediated messages, of a racially biased legal system, or a deeply racist society, I felt encouraged and noticed the dire need to study representations of Arab men and masculinities. More specifically, I chose to focus on representations of Egyptian men and masculine performances on the white screen, on how Egyptians portrayed themselves. At first, I intended to focus on marginalized men only – considering my initial interest in these power structures as I noticed them in Belgian media and society. However, I noticed the general absence of research on Arab men and masculinities and decided to include a wider range of films and masculinities.

The main question I started with was rather negative: Why are Arab men (and from now on, I will solely focus on Egyptians) portrayed and described in terms of a 'problem'? My supervisor correctly warned me to watch out for too much negativity, so I changed direction towards 'how' men are depicted. During a film class I was teaching, one of my students pointed out to me, after watching for the first time popular Egyptian films, that there was never a 'real man' in the films. They were always somehow restricted, either idiotic brutes, or powerless, yet well-behaved and educated men. Perhaps this was due to my particular interest in masculinity and the choice of films I offered to them. Yet, apart from a few films with heroic men (based on Arab history and folklore), this perception indeed appeared to be correct. So what is it about Egyptian men and a masculine performance on screen? Is Egyptian masculinity in crisis? Are Egyptian men lacking representations of positive ideals? Is the cinema industry portraying a perceived ideal through ridiculing its adversaries? Is the industry occupied with a bourgeois ideal, 'educating' the nation's citizens (Abu-

Lughod 2005: 81)? All these questions, and many more, will be handled throughout this research.

Throughout its long history (the first Egyptian feature film was produced in 1923), Egyptian cinema has produced many different male types, idealized men such as national heroes and independence-fighters, warriors and soldiers. Actors like Ahmad Mazhar, 'Umar al-Sharif, Salah Dhu al-Fiqar, and Farid Shawqi all played at some point in their careers a heroic Arab and/or Egyptian male. Also romantic singers and poets, idealized through their 'good' nature and wit were at the forefront of early Egyptian films. The most famous ones are the singers Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab and, later, Farid al-Atrash, who both ('Abd al-Wahhab significantly less) made musicals in which they starred and performed their romantic male type. The comedians and fools, led by Bishara Wakim and Nagib al-Rihani in the earliest films, later joined by Isma'il Yasin and 'Abd al-Mon'im Ibrahim, were mostly playing antiheroes, yet lovable good guys. The latter two were also not afraid to cross-dress in some of their films; their comedic star personas allowed to transgress gender norms and to play with heteronormativity as their virile antagonists fall in love with them.

The attentive reader will notice that this research on masculine performances does not include the 'most masculine' actor in Egyptian cinema's history, Rushdi Abaza. Nor does it include the 'don Juan' Ahmad Ramzi, or many other famous actors. I am aware of their absence, and in the following chapters I will explain why and how the choices were made. Although Rushdi Abaza is by many viewers (many of them middle-aged women) in the Arab world considered one of the most virile men, he is not the only one who is not discussed. There are many reasons to include him, but so are there many reasons to include others. This research is not a list of masculine versus non-masculine actors and performances, but focuses on the politics of the image and the creation of hegemonic ideals of masculinity – no matter who impersonates them. Nevertheless, I cannot completely ignore the star behind the masculine performance, since (s)he has a large following among the audience and creates certain expectations and affects audience responses. For example, casting the self-confident and imposing Ahmad Mazhar as Saladin, the liberator of Palestine and

Jerusalem in the 12th century, in Youssef Chahine's epic historical drama *al-Nasir Salah al-Din/Saladin the Victorious* (1963) is convincing and reassuring. Casting Rushdi Abaza's muscular and virile star persona in a role in which he is ridiculed by his twelve previous wives in Fatin 'Abd al-Wahhab's comedy *al-Zoga Talattashar/The Thirteenth Wife* (1962) assists in the film's comical effects and reminds the viewer of the transience of such an easily shattered macho façade. But this film was also about educating the Egyptian male into a proper citizen, and thus raises questions on class and gender and the portrayed 'ideal' of an Egyptian identity.

The 1950s and 60s were riddled with ideal images of men and women, all in favor of constructing a national Egyptian identity, each assisting in his or her own way in building the modern nation. The war of '67 shattered this idealized imagery and the male and female ideals were no longer at the center of the films. The 70s saw the emergence of films that were critical of the Nasirist vision for a modern Egypt. The 80s and 90s, then, allowed for greater diversity in depictions of men and women and their respective roles. With actors and actresses like Nur al-Sharif, 'Izzat al-'Alayli, 'Adil Imam, Ahmad Zaki, Su'ad Husni and Mirvat Amin the images of ideal men and women were not only questioned, they were also unattainable or undesirable. The era of the underdog male (and female) had begun. By the end of the 90s and the early 2000s, young, new actors contributed to more diversity in the portrayal of masculine identities. Not only misery and underdogs, but also young, educated professionals were depicted; they were men in touch with their feminine side and respectful towards women. Khalid Abu al-Naga is the poster-boy of this 'new' masculinity. But the 2000s signal also a return to patriarchal masculinity, a domineering and old-fashioned masculinity, sometimes veiled by a 'modern' lifestyle and fashionable clothes. Some of these paternalist actors and new patriarchs will be discussed throughout this research.

The attentive reader will also notice something else throughout the analysis. I focus on the power relations that exist and are implemented between the different masculine types and how male hegemony is always at some point recreated and reinstated. These power relations point at a leitmotif in this research. Although I am not analyzing

specific actors' careers, there seems to be a recognizable narrative pattern in the execution of power by older men/women over others, mainly younger and lower classes. There is always something rebellious about younger actors and actresses, a rebelliousness that seems to lose its fervor as they grow older. When actors and actresses grow older, their roles and performances on the screen change accordingly. That is why we can see the lower class criminal and tough guy Farid Shawqi in the 50s and early 60s perform a father-figure in the 70s through 90s. Even Nur al-Sharif, the underdog male of the late 70s through early 90s, turned into a patriarch in his later career. These are but broad generalizations, yet the pattern of an older, patriarchal father- or matriarchal mother-figure is a recurring motif in many Egyptian films. Sometimes oppressive, sometimes imbibed with knowledge, these patriarchs and matriarchs are representative of the young women's and men's burden.

This research is divided into two main parts. In the first part I start with a short historical overview of the recent history of Egypt, with a special focus on the developments in the creation of a national film industry in the country. Then I will give an overview of the different studies about masculinity, men and film in the Arab world. This literature overview is extensive but not inclusive, highlighting only the major studies that I have found of interest as a general framework for the analysis of masculine performances in Egyptian cinema. The next two chapters outline first the theoretical framework for analyzing masculinities and performances in film, and second the methodology for choosing the films and analyzing representations of men and masculinities. In the second part, I have included four chapters on the representations of male masculinities in four major eras in Egyptian film history as outlined above. The last chapter includes an analysis of the female masculinities that have been present in Egyptian cinema since the early beginnings, as well as an analysis of films by two of the most famous and popular female directors in the country, Inas al-Daghaydi and Nadia Hamza.

Although this research relies strongly on theories from sociology, gender and cultural studies, the main framework is historical. This

research is set up as a historical research that aims to shed light on the construction of masculine identities in particular historical times and places. The films in no way depict 'the real', yet they are grounded in a cultural and social context that is very real and tangible. The research thus aims to offer insights into the politics behind the representations of men and women on the screen and how this influenced the construction of gendered identities. Simultaneously, the discursive practices that shaped the historical periods in which these films were made have also influenced and continue to influence the representations of men and women, class relations, race and nationality.

1. An overview of Egypt's recent history - 1896-2011

In this chapter I will give a short overview of Egypt's modern history and the development of the country's cinema industry. I will only mention those events that are relevant to understanding how things have changed in film production and the industry over the course of more than a century of cinema in Egypt. As Walter Armbrust (1995: 83) has argued, in order to understand commercial (as well as art-house) Egyptian cinema both now and from earlier periods, it is necessary to have a vast understanding of the history, narratives, and contexts within which Egyptian films were and are made. This chapter will only serve as a backdrop to the research question, but it is nevertheless essential for an understanding of the changing gender representations. Gender is not ahistorical, detached from the culture and society in which it is represented and in which it has meaning. Therefore, I embark here on a hurried trip through Egypt's film history starting with the earliest screenings of films all the way through to the onset of the 2011 revolutions and uprisings we are witnessing in various Arabic speaking countries at the moment.

The start of Egypt's film industry coincided with a period of intense cultural, political and social changes in the late 19th century. Egypt became a British colony since the defeat of the Egyptian army at Tell el-Kebir in 1882. Tarek Osman (2010) argues that because of the British occupation, Egypt became a "regional commercial and trading destination" (id. 33), resulting in a huge influx of foreign nationals into Egypt looking to make some money. The result was that by 1930 there were already over 1.5 million immigrants, about 10 percent of the total population, mostly in the major urban centers of Cairo and Alexandria. Egypt, or at least its urban centers, in the first half of the twentieth century had become a cosmopolitan country. At the same time, the liberal Wafd-party garnered more and more support for a growing Egyptian nationalism. They created awareness of the need to limit the powers of the ruling family (the Muhammad 'Ali dynasty had been ruling since 1805) and turn Egypt into a parliamentary monarchy. This

period is often referred to as the "liberal experiment" (al-Sayyid-Marsot 1977) which started in 1924 with the election of Sa'd Zaghlul as first prime minister under the new constitution of 1923, the same year the first Egyptian feature-length film, *Fi Bilad Tut 'Ankh Amun/In the Country of Tutankhamun* was made by an Italian national, Victor Rosito.

1.1 The *Nahḍa* in nineteenth century Egypt and the "liberal experiment"

The modernization of Egypt gained momentum in the early nineteenth century under Muhammad 'Ali's rule. He modernized the nation using scientific and military advances made in Europe. Muhammad 'Ali was a fierce leader (infamous for slaughtering the medieval Mamluk rulers). During and after his rule, Egypt's population would expand in no time thanks in part to better medical care. One of the goals of his health care policy was to drastically lower child deaths. He moreover initiated the industrialization of Egypt, which is an important factor for the successful establishment of a national film industry in the first part of the 20th century.

The nineteenth century was also known as the period of the *Nahḍa* (Tomiche 1993: 900-3) or cultural, social, intellectual and political renewal. Great intellectuals and writers of the late nineteenth, early twentieth century are – among others – 'A'isha al-Taymuriyya, Huda Sha'rawi and Doria Shafiq, Qasim Amin, Muhammad Husayn Haykal, Taha Husayn, Tawfiq al-Hakim and many more. I have chosen these examples for various reasons, but particularly relating to this research on gender and film. 'A'isha al-Taymuriyya, Huda Sha'rawi and Doria Shafiq are some of the most famous pioneers for women's rights in Egypt. 'A'isha al-Taymuriyya (1840-1902) was not only a feminist; she was also a poet and a writer. As a feminist, she called for "equality between men and women [...] and inspired the early growth of Egyptian feminism" (Goldschmidt 2000: 211). Huda al-Sha'rawi (1879-1947) was a central figure in the feminist movement in Egypt. In 1923 she founded the Egyptian Feminist Union and in 1945 became the president of the Arab Feminist Union, thus regionalizing the feminist

cause (Badran 1996: 110). She was the first Egyptian woman to publicly take off her veil in defiance of patriarchal traditions and male domination over women's freedom of movement. Doria Shafiq (1908-1975) was predominantly active after World War II. She was also a writer, like al-Taymuriyya, and "attempted to unite her aesthetic voice with her activist voice in her struggle for liberation" (Nelson 1996: xvi). She was the editor of women's journals and established, like Sha'rawi, her own feminist union: Bint al-Nil Union ('Daughter of the Nile') in 1948.

In terms of a redefinition of gender relations, the thinker Qasim Amin (1863-1908) – among others – has written important essays arguing for the liberation and education of women in Egypt, among others *Tahrir al-Mar'a* (*The Liberation of Women*) and *al-Mar'a al-Jadida* (*The New Woman*). His advocacy to abolish the veil provoked heated reactions (Ahmed 1992: 145). But Leila Ahmed argues that Amin's assertions about Egyptian women were likely to be based on generalizations rather than observation, given the country's segregation at that time (id. 157). Muhammad Husayn Haykal (1888-1956) was a lawyer, writer and politician whose contribution to the intellectual discussion was important for the development of modern Egyptian literature upon publishing his novel *Zaynab* in 1913. He initially published the novel anonymously, but it was later reprinted under his name. Furthermore, this novel was turned into a film in 1930 and 1952, both directed by Muhammad Karim, one of the pioneers of Egyptian cinema. According to Timoche (1993: 901), *Zaynab* signaled a "return to authenticity" in the *Nahḍa* movement with greater emphasis on Egyptian and Arab culture and history.

No discussion on the modernization of Egyptian society and culture can remain without remembering Taha Husayn's contributions to the modern art scene in Egypt. Taha Husayn is famous for his novels and stories, but he was also an academic. He was a controversial thinker, and lost his post as university professor from the Cairo University for political reasons.[1] His novels have also contributed greatly to Egyptian

1 His dismissal was related to the publishing of a work questioning the authenticity of some of the pre-Islamic poetry traditionally found in the Ka'ba in Mecca, the so-called *mu'allaqāt*.

cinema. Several of them were filmed, particularly after the 1952 coup. One of the most famous books that was later turned into a film, is *Du'a' al-Karawan/Call of the Curlew* (Henry Barakat 1959) about, among other things, the backwardness and need for education to break free from the chains of tradition in Egypt's rural south. The gender relations in the film (and novel) are also of interest and reminiscent of modernist discourses prevalent in Egypt, particularly the (female) protagonist's transformation from an uneducated peasant girl into an educated citizen of a modern Egypt. But also the male in the film, an educated upper-class professional, is portrayed as in need of a proper education into becoming what is deemed an ideal and modern Egyptian citizen. Another important writer – particularly for theater and film – is Tawfiq al-Hakim. His plays were controversial and scandalized his colleagues in the public prosecutor's office, forcing him to resign (Goldschmidt 2000: 67). His book *Yawmiyyat Na'ib fi al-Aryaf/Diary of a Prosecutor in the County* (1937) was turned into a film in 1969, by directors Tawfiq Salih and Khayri Bishara.

I have given a lot of attention to these modernist writers and their advocacy for new roles for women. In her essay *Imagining the "New Man"*, Hoda El Sadda (2007) distinguishes also a new concept of masculinity that was advanced in these modernist, nationalist writings. These new gender roles and relations will be quintessential for the gender roles as presented in a modernist Egyptian cinema – as well as other cultural texts of the early 20th century. However, Jacob (2007, 2010 and 2011) has shown that the discussions on new types of masculinity extended beyond cultural texts, too. The discourse that developed in magazines in the early 20th century revolved around the colonial subject and a new concept of Egyptian masculinity in the wake of nationalist feelings, Jacob claims (2010: 659). But similar questions were raised about representations of women and men in films, as Ifdal Elsaket (n.d.) has shown in her study about early Egyptian films and the depiction of the modern nation. Critics' reactions to these earliest films betrayed a similar concern about a national image for the country, as well as a concern about images of men and – particularly – women.

Although the industrialization of the country in the early 19th century took up a higher pace under the rule of Muhammad ‘Ali, it is debatable whether the *Nahḍa* has its direct roots in the French expedition at the end of the 18th century, as some historians argue.[2] Muhammad ‘Ali started an active policy of sending Egyptian scholars and officers to Europe to receive a modern education and bring this knowledge back to Egypt. Combined with a growing sense of nationalism in the nineteenth century, particularly after the defeat by the British, the *Nahḍa* was a renaissance movement with a particular Arab nationalist touch. Film scholar Malek Khouri (2005) also turns to the nineteenth century *Nahḍa* to explain Arab cinematic modernity. As mentioned, this period saw great academic and cultural efforts to first and foremost renew classical Arabic language as well as the arts and their importance within society. The reappraisal and preservation of Arab and Islamic heritage was equally important, which was increasingly used in an anticolonial discourse against the Ottoman Turkish rulers in the first place. The literary and artistic renewal concerned an inherently anticolonial and thus political discourse, as Khouri said: “the openness toward and the recognition of the *polity of the text* constituted the essence of Arab modernity” (id. 8, emphasis mine). Artistic production was part and parcel of the construction of a national identity within the larger project of Egyptian self-rule that emerged in the 19th century and continued in the early 20th century.

Cinema and the moving image were introduced to Arab audiences in Egypt at the Toussoun Stock Exchange in Alexandria in January 1896, during the British occupation. Cinema as a “new textual mode of communication” (id. 9) was immediately associated with the concerns of modern Arab thinkers and “was largely fashioned via a modernist symbiosis that informed and was informed by a budding national identity struggling to affirm its heterogeneity and find a new role for itself in the continuing fight for national liberation” (id. 9). Modernist Arab thinkers emphasized the openness of language and thought and were therefore able to incorporate different philosophical, social,

2 Sheehi notes that the French occupation is not the reason, but rather a catalyst for a movement that was already well underway in Arab capitals to modernize the Arab nation (Sheehi 2004: 4).

cultural and political ideas and ideologies in an Egyptian context. After British occupation of Egypt started in 1882, and more directly after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1923, the struggle for independence was directed towards European nations. As such, the film played an important role in Egypt's struggle for national independence in the 1920s and became more prominently nationalist after 1952.

1.2 Building a national cinema industry: 1923-1952

The early days of Egyptian cinema production were characterized by changing social and political conditions and discourses that predated it. The first films shot in Egypt were short documentaries from the 1910s. By 1923 a foreign resident (Victor Rosito) shot Egypt's first feature film, *Fi Bilad Tut 'Ankh Amun/In the Country of Tutankhamun*. The German-trained Egyptian Muhammad Bayyumi was the film's cameraman, earning the film a place in Egypt's national film historiography. Four years later, in 1927, the 'first' Egyptian film was produced, *Layla*, by the Egyptian actress, director and producer 'Aziza Amir, directed by the Italian-Egyptian Stéphane Rosti. The following year[3] the Lama-brothers (Lebanese-Argentinians) produced and directed *Qubla fi al-Sahra'/Kiss in the Desert*, with Egyptian actress Badriyya Ra'fat and actor Anwar Wagdi. The film turned out to be a box office flop because of its stereotypical representations of Egypt, undermining the country's self-image as a modern nation (Elsaket n.d.).

I would like to point out the transnational nature of early Egyptian cinema, though, and the high number of women participating in and financing film productions. Many 'foreigners' (Ibrahim and Badr Lama, Asya Daghir, Mary Queeny, Victor Rosito, Fritz Kramp, etc.) but also Egyptians ('Aziza Amir, Fatima Rushdi, Muhammad Bayyumi, Anwar

3 The website www.elcinema.com mentions however that *Kiss in the Desert* was produced and distributed half a year earlier than *Layla*. Viola Shafik (2007: 18-9) mentions that *Kiss in the Desert* was at first not recognized as an Egyptian production because of an emerging nationalism in post-1952 film historiography and the film's Palestinian-Argentinian directors and producers were not considered 'Egyptian'.

Wagdi, Yusif Wahbi, etc.) were active as producers, directors or cameramen in early cinema thanks to the cosmopolitan environment in Egypt's urban centers and the as yet uninstitutionalized nature of the earliest productions. The films were made with private investment by pioneers who invested their own money in this new venture. Many women who would invest their personal savings in their own films would not yield a sufficient turnover to produce another film (Shafik 2007: 191), taking great risks as pioneers of this new art form.

The 1920s were characterized by silent film productions and a growing number of cinemas that were built across the country. The first cinema was built in 1906 by the French company Pathé, but major investments started to flow in from the 20s onwards. A big change in the haphazard investments and the start of an institutionalized cinema industry came when Tala'at Harb – the director of Misr Bank and a major industrial investor – built Studio Misr. The studios were inaugurated in 1935 and their first production, *Widad* (Fritz Kramp), was released in 1936, with Umm Kulthum playing the lead. The importance of Studio Misr was its modern sound recording studio, enabling sound to be recorded and edited in Egypt whereas before that, sound was recorded in Europe (Shafik 2001: 25). The studio moreover sent Egyptian directors and cameramen to Europe to learn technical skills related to filmmaking and invited foreign directors to come and work in Egypt. Fritz Kramp was one of the studio's foreign employees, while the young and (later to become) famous directors Salah Abu Sayf and Ahmad Badrakhan were sent to Italy and France respectively to study cinema there.

Women, who had played major roles in the earliest productions, lost significance after the film industry was institutionalized with the establishment of Studio Misr and other studios.[4] Particularly their presence as directors diminished; as such, the industry became mainly dominated by men. There are several notable exceptions, like Lebanese producers Asya Daghir and her niece Mary Queeny, or 'Aziza Amir who

4 Not only Studio Misr signaled the start of the consolidation of the film industry. Many other studios were already active and continued to produce the majority of Egyptian films in the 40s. Studio Misr was one among many, and the importance attributed to it is sometimes exaggerated (Armbrust 2002: 82-3).

continued to act and write her own scripts. Asya Daghir remained one of the biggest producers in Egypt up until the 1960s through her production company, Lotus Films. She produced her first film, *Ghadat al-Sahra'/Desert Beauty* (Widad 'Urfi 1929), at the age of 28 and introduced color film to Egyptian cinema in 1957 with the film *Rudd Qalbi/Back Alive* ('Izz al-Din Dhu al-Fiqar).[5] Asya Daghir produced the mega-production *al-Nasir Salah al-Din/Saladin the Victorious* (Youssef Chahine 1963) and her niece, Mary Queeny, was also to become one of the major producers in Egypt through her (multiple) production companies together with her husband, Ahmad Galal.

In this period and up to the 1952 coup, Egypt's studios produced over 300 films and, with the introduction of sound, genres and genre conventions started to develop. Whereas the first films were historical *Bedouin*-films – in line with a folkloric revival in Egyptian art of the time – as of the 1930s, the genres were more diverse, including comedies (*Salama fi Khayr/Salama is Fine*, Niyazi Mustafa 1937) and musicals (*Unshudat al-Fu'ad/Song of the Heart*, Mario Volpi 1932). Particularly the comedy became part and parcel of Egypt's film industry, with prominent comedians like Nagib al-Rihani (1889-1949). Al-Rihani was a famous theater actor who later started acting in films as well. He became particularly famous through his comedic character, Kishkish Bey, the headman (*'umda*) of a small village. Other famous comedy actors of the time are 'Ali al-Kassar (1887-1957) – who acted mainly Nubian characters – and Bishara Wakim (1890-1949). Bishara Wakim was the main actor in the first 'Egyptian' silent film, *Barsum Yibhath 'an Wazifa/Barsoum Is Looking For a Job* (Muhammad Karim 1923) and as of the late 30s acted in many comedies.

Early musicals became vehicles for the famous singers Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab (1897-1991) and Umm Kulthum (1898-1975). 'Abd al-Wahhab was an innovator in Egyptian music and expanded the traditional Arab orchestra or *takht* to include Western instruments like

5 *Rudd Qalbi/Back Alive* was not the actual first Egyptian color film, the first was *Baba 'Aris/Daddy Wants a Wife* (Husayn Fawzi 1950). This film used a different, not very common and complex, French technique called Rouxcolor. *Back Alive* used the cheaper and more practical Eastman Kodak technique. It lasted nevertheless until the 1970s before Egyptian cinema would break definitely with black and white film and produce only color films.

the violin, the bass and the quarter-tone piano. For his first film, *al-Warda al-Bayda'/The White Rose* (Muhammad Karim 1932), 'Abd al-Wahhab composed the music of the film, which was to become the first Egyptian musical. The film was a great hit with audiences, too. Umm Kulthum was regularly cast to play young adolescent girls, although she was already well in her thirties when she first started acting. Both Umm Kulthum and 'Abd al-Wahhab ended their acting careers in the early 40s, making way for comedy actors and -films. The time of the romantic musical was over and the commercial *film isti'rāḍī* became the new popular format, interspersed with belly dancing and songs (Shafik 1998: 24). 'Abd al-Wahhab continued to compose songs for popular films, while Umm Kulthum became the most famous singer of the 'Golden Age', practically unrivaled until well into the 1960s.

In 1939 Studio Misr produced one of the first examples of cinematic realism, *al-'Azima/Determination* (Kamal Salim), whose topics of social progress and class conflict were to become central themes in Egyptian films.[6] *Determination* is a realist drama about Muhammad (Husayn Sidqi) and Fatma (Fatima Rushdi), both from a poor neighborhood planning to get married. Muhammad's only hope is to start a business together with his colleague 'Adli (Anwar Wagdi) from university, the son of a rich pasha. The film is critical of the luxurious lifestyle of 'Adli, the pasha's son, in comparison to the poor lives of Muhammad and Fatma. Nevertheless, the film's solution and the couple's relief eventually lies with the rich landowner whose money helps Muhammad on his way. In light of the political situation in Egypt at the time, it was inconceivable to release a film too critical about class

6 Film critic 'Ali Abu Shadi (1998) mentions Fritz Kramp's 1938 film *Lashin* as the country's first experiments with realism, although it is a historical film taking place in the 12th century. Its interest in social inequality and a proletarian uprising makes it a film close to the realist aesthetics with its political agenda. Ifdal Elsaket, on the other hand, mentions some 'realist' elements in Muhammad Karim's *Zaynab* (1930). Although he used Soviet- and German-inspired film techniques, the film's locations and use of peasants are inspired by realist aesthetics. Nevertheless, the film was rife with a class-conscious depiction of peasants. His use of the aristocratic Bahiga Hafez in the role of Zaynab constituted several issues with the 'uneducated' peasants during the filming (Elsaket n.d.).

relations; it would not pass the censorship committee.[7] Similar to *Zaynab* (Muhammad Karim 1930; see earlier on *Nahḍa* and Haykal's novel), and indeed most early Egyptian films, *Determination* betrayed a modernist middle class ideology, arguing for new gender relations and depicting an image of Egypt with a progressive future. Lila Abu-Lughod called this 'development realism' (Abu-Lughod: 2005: 57-61, and 81), referring to a large number of popular serials being produced by Egyptian state television, purporting to bring an educational message to the masses neatly packaged into what she calls 'state culture'. Abu-Lughod's assertions relate to 1980s and 90s television serials, but are no less applicable to early Egyptian cinema.

By the end of the 40s, some directors were taking shy steps into nationalist film making, for example the film about nationalist leader Mustafa Kamil, *Mustafa Kamil* (Ahmad Badrakhan 1952). Ahmad Badrakhan directed this film prior to the 1952 coup and the censor refused to give it a screening license. After the coup in July of that year, the film did receive a screening license and was presented to the public in December of that year (Gordon 1999: 65). Another pan-Arab nationalist film was of 'Aziza Amir's hand (as producer), *Fatat Min Filistin/A Girl From Palestine* (Mahmud Dhu al-Fiqar 1948). Set during the Palestinian war – which was ongoing – this film tells the love story between two heroes, an Egyptian pilot who was shot down and stranded in a Palestinian village, and a Palestinian girl whose house was a storage room for the Arab resistance's weapons. The ensuing love between the two protagonists symbolizes the pan-Arab ideals the film espouses, but also points at Egypt's cultural and political hegemony – or at least how Egypt perceived its cultural and political role in the region, a role the country continued to play after the abolition of the monarchy.

7 This is what happened to *Lashin*, which was forbidden to screen for over eight months because of its premise of a population rising up against a tyrant and imposing their own, chosen, leader. Only when the director changed the end to a more lenient one, where the tyrant suddenly gains insight and is allowed to remain on the throne, the film was allowed to screen. *Determination* avoided a similar fate by allowing the *pasha* a positive role in the resolution to the conflict.

1.3 The Free Officers' revolution and Public Sector filmmaking

On the 23rd of July 1952, several young high-ranking officers in the Egyptian army took hold of the country in a bloodless coup. During the night of 22 and 23 July, the officers seized key positions in Cairo and a few days later also in Alexandria. They then forced the king into exile and appointed his infant son Ahmad Fu'ad to be the new king of Egypt. The rule of the new king did not last long. In 1953 Muhammad Nagib became the country's first president, a year later deposed and followed by Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir. The coup followed a period of increased instability in Egypt, with many strikes and protests ever since the end of the Second World War. This left the Wafd-party in shambles (Vatikiotis 1985: 368) enabling the officers to take hold of the country. They nevertheless encountered much difficulty in consolidating their power. Soon, workers' protests erupted across the country, specifically in textile factories in the Delta.[8] The army responded the way it was used to responding, with quick military trials and executions of key figures. Soon, the coup-leaders started to quell political and social dissent against their 'revolution'. By 1954, the new regime had dissolved all opposition parties, including their initial supporters, the Muslim Brotherhood, and jailed their leaders.

The new regime initially did not attempt to use cinema extensively as a vehicle of propaganda for their politics, perhaps because of their lack of a coherent revolutionary ideology (Ginat 1997: 13). More generally, political films were simply not that common in the period following independence (Armbrust 2011: 230). One of the earlier productions is *Allah Ma'ana/God With Us* (Ahmad Badrakhan 1955), a film that tells the story of the Free Officers' revolution. The film showed Egypt's first president Muhammad Nagib (1953-54; played by Zaki Tulimat) as the leader of the revolution. But when Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir took power, the scenario was changed completely and the character of Muhammad Nagib was written out of the plot and Zaki

8 Almost sixty years later, the textile workers in the Delta city al-Mahalla al-Kubra were at the forefront of the different protests against Egypt's deposed president, Husni Mubarak, and the regime in 2006, 2008 and 2011.

Tulimat's name deleted from the credits (Qasim 2012). In the period following the revolution, and with the new constitution and censorship laws, old taboos (most importantly class relations) were now practically free game, although new taboos were quickly put in place, specifically about the army and their revolution (Gordon 2002: 9).

In the 1960s, 'Abd al-Nasir turned towards socialism, with more and stronger relations with Eastern Europe, particularly after the Soviet funding of the High Dam in Aswan and a lucrative arms deal, implementing the first five-year plan (Ginat 1997: 13). He started to nationalize banks and industries, including the cinema. In 1956 'Abd al-Nasir nationalized the Suez Canal, leading to the tripartite aggression, and he continued to nationalize industries and the media in the following years. The era of public sector film production, however, did not culminate in a distinct non-commercial cinema industry in Egypt, which it had done in other post-colonial regions (Shafik 1998: 25). Nevertheless, many films discussing social issues were produced (both in public and private productions), within the previously mentioned air of 'development realism' (Abu-Lughod 2005: 81). The public sector never produced much more than a quarter of the total film production in Egypt and remained relatively small compared to the private sector (Shafik 1998: 32). However, the public sector film industry did offer opportunities for young and established directors to distinguish themselves (Khouri 2010: 55), such as Salah Abu Sayf and Tawfiq Salih.

Apart from stronger public institutions and government, 'Abd al-Nasir's nationalist socialist governing style was characterized by a strong anticolonialism and antifeudalism in order to bring about 'social justice' (Abdel-Fadil 1980: 1-2). For 'Abd al-Nasir, socialism did not mean building a classless society, but rather the "dissolution of 'class distinctions', within the Egyptian society" (id.: 2). Abdel-Fadil's pro-Nasirist biases are obvious though, especially when he considers 'Abd al-Nasir's establishment of an economically strong ruling military class and of institutions and politics centered on his own persona, which essentially undermined the Nasirist project. Nevertheless, Egypt's economic and political relations with "Western" countries

improved in the 1960s, with for example half of the wheat supplies to Egypt coming from the United States (Abdel-Malek 1968: xviii). Abdel-Malek concludes that, although there was a strong state presence in the economy, the ideology itself cannot simply be defined as socialist (id. 365-9). 'Abd al-Nasir went back and forth between a left and right solution, which was reflected in the alternation between a leftist and rightist prime minister (Baker 1978: 90). These changes in directions furthermore prove Ginat's earlier point about the military revolutionaries' lack of a clear ideology. It is also proof of the cult developing around 'Abd al-Nasir's persona, with strong pan-Arab nationalism but little social vision for Egypt. In cinema, 'Abd al-Nasir's personality cult culminated in Youssef Chahine's heroic portrayal of Saladin in his 1963 film, which contained obvious references to Egypt's leader. In 1996, director Muhammad Fadil made the film *Nasir 56* with Ahmad Zaki in the role of 'Abd al-Nasir. The former president's personality cult was revived.

1.4 The 1967 defeat and 1973 'victory': What after socialism?

The defeat of 1967 was a major turning point in the history of the region, foretelling the decline in popular support for Arab socialism. The defeat in the war caused 'Abd al-Nasir to formally resign from office, although he soon returned. After the defeat, student protests erupted, calling for a more severe punishment of the culprits of the defeat (Vatikiotis 1985: 407). These protests were violently suppressed, but 'Abd al-Nasir would not live long to continue his vision of the future. He died in 1970 – his funeral brought about huge gatherings in Cairo and all over Egypt – and was succeeded by Anwar al-Sadat. Al-Sadat inherited a country in debt, especially after the expensive and destructive 1967 war, which also resulted in an Israeli occupation of the Sinai Desert, thus effectively cutting off Egypt from its oil revenues (the main oil fields are in the Sinai Desert) and putting the Suez Canal out of order. As such, al-Sadat did not have much other choice but to look for other means of investment.

Al-Sadat quickly tried to change 'Abd al-Nasir's economic policy and opened up the country more and more towards foreign investors.

Within a few years, al-Sadat had started his new economic politics, or *infitāḥ* (translated as *open-door-policy*), which meant – among other things – the re-privatization of businesses, including the cinema industry. Privatization in the cinema industry was mostly nominal, selling a few theaters across Egypt while the studios and laboratories remained public property well into the 90s (Shafik 2001: 30). Opening up the country to foreign investment was no easy feat, and eventually al-Sadat would fail, because 'Abd al-Nasir's Arab socialism had left "a constitutional/legal/regulatory structure as inimical to private sector activity as any in the communist world" (Henry and Springborg 2001: 139). There were large investments from Gulf countries – al-Sadat had decided to economically approach the more conservative countries in the Gulf from where many Egyptians sent back remittances.

Another difficulty that al-Sadat faced, was overturning the military class that had emerged under 'Abd al-Nasir and had been in charge of major political and economic decision-making (Henry and Springborg 2001: 152). Instead, al-Sadat tried to limit their power and set up a more civilian involvement in politics and the economy. Being from the army and part of 'Abd al-Nasir's inner circle himself, one can question his sincere attempts to downscale the military's occupation of politics and economy. Al-Sadat also had to deal with a plethora of social problems, such as a growing population, increasing poverty and an ever-growing gap between rich and poor. The bread riots of January 1977 are a good example of the failure of al-Sadat's liberal economic policies and a growing resistance in the country. The direct reason for the riots was al-Sadat's decision to cut subsidies on basic staple goods, such as rice and sugar, a decision he took under pressure from the International Monetary Fund. During the 1970s there was also an increasing Islamist presence in all layers of society – including the army. The rising Islamism in society was perceived as a threat, particularly after the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. In order to appease Islamists, al-Sadat would amend the 1971 constitution in 1980 and include that Islamic shari'a would be the principal source of legislation – a principal also kept in the new 2012 and 2013 constitutions. However, al-Sadat's crackdown on Islamists and opposition voices across the country and the peace treaty signed with

Israel in 1979 further angered the Islamist opposition against his policy, accumulating in his assassination in 1981.

The film industry also began to undergo changes in the 70s. Petrodollar-rich Gulf countries invested in the country's cinema industry, resulting in Gulf-market oriented commercial productions, or *sīnimā al-muqāwalāt* (*entrepreneur cinema*). These films were produced for video distribution, mainly in the Gulf, reflecting "mediocre production standards, hasty direction [...], and the use of non-star actors" (Tartoussieh 2011: 221-2). The period of the late 60s and early 70s also saw many film makers move to other Arab countries, with notable productions like *Dhi'ab La Ta'kul al-Lahm/Wolves Don't Eat Meat* (Samir Khuri 1973), a joint Egyptian-Lebanese production which was entirely shot in Kuwait. One last important factor I need to mention for this period, is the establishment of the *Jamā'at al-Sīnimā al-Jadīda* (*New Cinema Group*) in 1968. This was a group of young filmmakers and critics whose goal was to induce a new attitude towards film art, fighting the sheer commercialism in Egyptian cinema (Khouri 2005: 57). They did this through a joint manifesto calling for a new approach to cinema as art, but also through the establishment of a film club in Cairo and a specialized film magazine, al-Sinima. The group did not remain revolutionary for long and Nouri Bouzid (1997) notes that soon their techniques "succumbed to the old patterns" (id. 245). He called for a cinema that would be more self-conscious, examining the reasons behind the defeat. But Bouzid suggests that the group's revolutionary approach to cinema and dismissal of melodrama in favor of a more realistic film style and content was quickly overshadowed by a return to commercial filmmaking.

1.5 Mubarak and the decline of cinema productions

In October 1981, Husni Mubarak took power, after the violent assassination of al-Sadat during a military parade remembering the Six October war of 1973. By 2011, the year Mubarak was deposed, he had become the longest serving president in Egypt, staying in office for almost 30 years. During his reign, Egypt underwent enormous sociopolitical and economic changes in an ever changing global

economy. During the first years of his service, he continued to deal with the "Islamist problem" and created a strong police-state. Mubarak was already in office during Sadat's regime, establishing a "behind-the-scenes control of the military and security forces" (Henry and Springborg 2001: 153), which he maintained in the police state he was creating. Mubarak's media propaganda also continued to vilify the Islamists in the name of fighting terrorism but essentially to justify repression of all opposition voices. Mubarak's police state was, however, criticized in several contemporary popular Egyptian films, the most famous one being *'Imarat Ya'qubiyan/The Yaqoubian Building* (Marwan Wahid Hamid, 2005), an adaptation from 'Ala' al-Aswani's acclaimed novel with the same title. One of the most controversial scenes in the film was the rape of a political prisoner, sanctioned by the investigating officer.[9]

One of the biggest challenges to Mubarak's neoliberalist economic policies[10] was the exponentially growing gap between rich and poor, also in part because of the rapidly expanding population. During his 30-year reign, the population doubled from approximately 40 million in 1980 to over 75 million in 2006.[11] Approximately a third of Egyptians living in urban areas, live in unregulated housing or *'ashwā'iyyāt*[12] that have sprouted around the city, occupying previously fertile land. Those areas had started to grow around the urban centers, particularly Cairo, in the 1970s and have continued to do so throughout the 80s and early 90s when the government did not yet pay too much attention to

9 Rape is still a common form of torture in Egyptian prisons and police stations. Human rights organizations continue to denounce the practice and the lack of punishment for the perpetrators among the police or secret service forces.

10 Mubarak's neoliberalism not only meant privatization of businesses and reallocation of public expenditure, but it also entailed impeding political liberties for opposition members (Mitchell 1999: 32).

11 The country's leading newspaper, al-Ahram, wrote that between 2006 and 2012, the population had increased 18%, reaching 91 million Egyptians across the globe (including Egyptian expats). From: Ahram Online, 30 August 2012.

12 It remains elusive to define what are *'ashwā'iyyāt*. What are the criteria to define an urban area as such (i.e. 'haphazard')? Do we use class as a criterion, or rather only look at the urban features of the area (unplanned, unlicensed, no services, etc.)?

these areas (Isma'il 2006: xviii). Initially these new neighborhoods were only considered an "urban management challenge" (id.: xix), but when they also turned out to be hotbeds for Islamist resistance and opposition to the government, they were increasingly perceived as possible threats to security. The growing number of these *'ashwā'iyyāt* has also had an influence on film production, particularly since 2000, when a so-called *sīnimā al-'ashwā'iyyāt* ('informal areas'-cinema) came to the fore (Karawya 2011). This type of films included comedies by actor Muhammad Sa'd[13] and the more 'serious' social dramas by director Khalid Yusif[14] for the first time explicitly representing this particularly 'new' urban-rural phenomenon.

In terms of output, Egyptian cinema went through the biggest crisis ever since its inception. In the nineties the Arab world witnessed a satellite TV boom, every house being dotted with multiple dishes, each connected to a television set placed centrally in the home. The boom not only in satellite dishes but also in satellite stations across the region has resulted in a sharp drop in cinema productions. Ever since the increase in television productions (because of the diversification in television channels and increased production of TV series, the *musalsalāt*) and a declining artistic standard in popular (film) productions (partly as a result of the '*entrepreneur cinema*' and dwindling investment in the industry, but also the public sector's bankruptcy after 1967), the number of moviegoers has gone down and, with them, the number of productions. In 1994 Egypt only produced 18 feature films, the lowest since the Golden Age of the 40s through 60s and down by over 40 compared to the decade before (Shafik 1998: 43). Only by the end of the decade did the number of productions climb again to more acceptable and viable numbers. As a result of a lack of investment, by the end of the 90s European co-productions gained importance. Youssef Chahine and Yusri Nasrallah started making films with European funding (e.g. Chahine's *al-Masir/Destiny* from 1997 and

13 A good example is Muhammad Sa'd's *al-Limbi* character and the movie with the same title from 2002, although that film is not actually set in one of the *'ashwā'iyyāt* (see chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion on the meaning of *'ashwā'iyyāt*, or 'informal settlements'.
14 Particularly Yusif's 2006 film *Hina Maysara/Till Things Get Better* is exemplary of these neighborhoods as décor.

Nasrallah's *Bab al-Shams/Gate of the Sun*), while Nasrallah's film *al-Madina/The City* (1999) could be considered as one of the first steps taken to create 'independent' films in Egypt.

1.6 A decade of protests

In the introduction to their anthology, Singerman and Amar (2006) talk about protests and social unrest that have erupted across Egypt in the 2000s. Of particular importance is the *Kifaya*-movement, initially set up to oppose Mubarak's grooming of his son Gamal Mubarak for the presidency. *Kifaya* was a mix of opposition groups, including liberals, secularists and Islamists opposing the Mubarak regime's cruelty and lack of respect for human rights.[15] Singerman and Amar have labeled the protests that have erupted across the country and particularly in main urban centers like Cairo, "cosmopolitan claims-making" (Singerman and Amar 2006: 5). A growing educated, upper middle class population with access to English-language media, congregating in Cairo's Western-style café's (as opposed to the more traditional *ahwa*), was one of the instigators of these new social movements, they claim. I would argue that the Downtown[16] *ahawi* (plural of *ahwa*) were and still are the main places of assembly for those young middle class men and women, who are highly educated, politically aware, and have access to English-language media.

15 The popular support for the movement declined rapidly after the 2005 elections and their split up in 2006. In the 2010 comedy film with popular actress Yasmin 'Abd al-'Aziz, *al-Thalatha Yashtaghilunaha/All Three Made Fun of Her* ('Ali Idris) these liberal and secular opposition movements were ridiculed, alongside the 'hip, Americanized youth' and the new religious class characterized by tele-preachers. Walter Armbrust (2012) in his analysis of *Rami al-I'tisami/Rami the Protestor* (Nadir Galal 2008) argues that other films, too, have ridiculed popular protests.

16 Downtown, or in Egyptian Arabic *Wusṭ il-balad*, is the 19th century modern city, built between the Nile river and the old city of Cairo, the Fatimid city (sometimes referred to as Islamic Cairo). Particularly the area around the Egyptian stock exchange is littered with local coffee shops which continue to witness scenes of mass arrests.

Those young men and women were later on accompanied by the textile workers from al-Mahalla, who started strikes and protests in that city in 2006. These protests were not new to Egypt. When we look back to the last century, we can see that more or less each generation was characterized by major student or worker protests, social movements that have continued to challenge the governments and regimes. In the late 19th century, the first workers protests were organized by the tobacco and cigarette industry workers, demanding better pay and working conditions. In 1919 there were again large protests organized by the Wafd-party and its leader, Sa'd Zaghlul, culminating in Britain's formal recognition of Egypt's independence in 1922 and a new constitution in 1923. In 1946 there were again violent protests against the British occupation and many students lost their lives when the police opened fire upon the demonstration when it crossed 'Abbas-bridge toward downtown (remembered for example in the nationalist anti-colonial film *Fi Baytina Rajul/A Man in Our House*, by Henri Barakat 1961). Another thirty years on, there were the violent bread riots in 1977, and one generation later we see these protests erupting again. Obviously there are big differences in the reasons behind and the contexts surrounding these historical protests, but nevertheless it shows the people's continuing struggle for bread, freedom and social justice.[17] The film industry in Egypt has always been informed by political events in the country and is rooted in the general developments in the country's cultural scene as well. The way it deals with the changes and events is one of the main questions of this research.

17 This was the slogan of the 2011 revolution in Egypt: "'*īsh, ḥurriyya, 'adāla igtimā'iyya*", or bread, freedom and social justice.

2. Literature overview

In this chapter I will give a short overview of several landmark studies about film and gender in Egypt and the region. I will mostly focus on those studies that have proven to be pivotal in the development of the field of gender studies and which are also of use for this research. As will become clear from this chapter, these studies cover diverse topics and are inherently interdisciplinary. Gender studies is a young discipline in the West, and particularly so in Arab countries. Since it is still a new field, this means that, with regard to men's studies, there is little to no theorizing, and – as we will see – it is sometimes based on populist assumptions of Middle Eastern men. In a second part of this chapter I will focus on available film and media studies in Egypt and the region. Although Egypt has the oldest and most developed film industry of all Arabic speaking countries, and although relatively numerous Arabic historiographies are available, research on gender representations in Egyptian and Arab films as well as studies that venture beyond a mere structural analysis of Arab cinemas, continues to be elusive.

In the first part of this chapter I will outline some of the most essential studies on gender in the Arab world, and areas where I see room for improvement. This will be followed by a specific focus on studies about men and masculinities in the Arab world, offering an overview of the available studies and the methods applied, pointing at the need for diversification and a more material approach towards the study of men and masculinities in the Arab world. In the third part I will highlight the present state of film studies in Egypt and the Arab world, followed by a short overview of the available studies about the politics of representation in cultural products.

2.1 Gender studies

In general, gender studies in the area is a new discipline with limited studies available and – as a result – suffers from a lack of theorizing

compared to other countries or regions – specifically the Anglo-Saxon traditions. Furthermore, until recently when thinking of gender in the Arab world, this mostly incurred women's rights, with a particular interest in oppression, hijab and female genital mutilation (Ouzgane 2011: 68). This 'limited' interest is part of a wider discourse instigated by early anthropological research. Abu Lughod (1989) claims that early anthropology focused on three main issues, namely Islam, segregation and segmentation. Most importantly she finds that it is time for anthropologists to include other disciplines and methods in their research. She encourages, in other words, the use of a more materialistic approach in theorizing about anthropology and embedding the studied society and 'culture'[1] in a historical and socio-cultural framework, considering "such things as state violence and repression, class inequalities, consumerism, military occupation, changing politics of gender and sexuality, migration, exile, and work" (id. 300). The same goes for studies on Arab men, that have until recently focused on men in terms of their religion and religious practices, in terms of their normativity as opposed to women's 'otherness', or as parts of a larger entity (e.g. the tribe) that essentially defines their identities as men, ignoring individual experiences of being a man and ultimately reinforcing common perceptions of Arab men (and women).

Men and masculinities in the region have for a long time been overlooked and perhaps have been taken for granted. Deniz Kandiyoti (1994: 197) describes her own misconceptions about Middle Eastern masculinities clearly: "I had made the elementary mistake of assuming that [men] had come into being as full-blown men, as patriarchs themselves, on the flimsy grounds that this role was culturally available to them". She points at the limitations of certain approaches to the study of men in specific, non-Western contexts. A focus limited to the external influences on masculine identities risks neglecting the internal inconsistencies of patriarchal types, whether subordinated, marginalized or hegemonic (id. 198-9). The assumptions made about

1 'Culture' is a complex term which is defined here according to Stuart Hall's use of the word, namely as "patterns of organization" that "reveal themselves [...] within or underlying *all* social practices" (Hall 1980: 60).

Arab men and their gendered identities were (and often still are) restricting, confining men to one dominant mode of male identity. This is due to a leading discourse about patriarchy and male domination in Arab societies, informed in part by Bourdieu in his seminal *Masculine Domination* (2002), but also informed by colonialism (Hassan 2003), which have informed anthropology and gender studies on the region. Both have turned out to be intricately connected disciplines in the Middle East and North Africa. As a result of the limited scope of research about Arab men as colonial subjects, the discipline of men and masculinity studies is still very young and underdeveloped. Over the last decade, though, academic research has started to include men and masculinities, although once more studies on representations of men (e.g. Hassan 2003, Aghacy 2009) or questioning the construction of male identities remain extremely limited.[2]

A quick search alone in any popular internet search engine on the topics of 'gender' and 'Islam',[3] for example, results in an enormous amount of literature on women in Islam, but close to nothing shows up about masculinity and men. Some literature talks about the history of feminism in Islamic societies (Mernissi 1991; Badran 1996; Haddad and Esposito 2001; Mahmood 2005; Ali 2006; Wadud 1999, 2006; Bier 2011), other studies focus on the role of women and women's rights in a modern society and particularly relating these roles to policy making (Ahmed 1992; Kandiyoti 1991a, 1991b, 1996; Saliba, Allen and Howard 2002; Keddie 2007; Kassam 2010). Most of these researchers are women, too, although there is the occasional exception (McMurray 1997; Hopkins and Sa'd Eddin 1997; Haddad and Esposito 2001). This is only a very quick first look, but it is obvious from the start that men and masculinities have been grossly neglected and – contrary to our claims of fluid gender identities – have been taken for granted.

2 With the exception of e.g. Isma'il (2009), Aghacy (2009), Jacob (2010), and Ouzgane (2011).

3 Obviously this search is extremely limited and ill-defined, but it gives a general overview. Furthermore, the search term 'Islam' does not say anything about the Arab world, which is much more diverse religiously, ethnically, socially and linguistically.

To avoid accusations of being orientalist, particularly since the renewed 'Western' interest in 'the Arab world' with discourses of Arab (and Muslim) men in crisis (Amar 2011), this study on the topic of gender and masculinity avoids discussions on common themes like 'honor and shame' from an Islamic perspective.[4] As Amar correctly argues, Arab men are depicted as being in crisis for reasons related to their inability to cope with changing realities, like a growing (female) workforce and emancipation in Arab countries.[5] The way with which popular Western venues write about men is as if the only acceptable Arab or Muslim man – he argues – would be the Westernized gay man. He relates this coverage to earlier and perhaps standardized ways of talking about Arab men in terms of their presumed omnipresent misogyny and repression of their weaker 'other'.

This resulted in making Arab masculinity 'hypervisible' (id. 40). Amar understands 'hypervisible' as a stereotypical representation of Arab and Muslim men in order to define them as the cause of the issue, a problem that has to be dealt with, and essentially as a way of rendering them – as individuals – obsolete. 'They' are talked about as a unified group, in the same way as is talked about Islam as a unified block with no option or possibility for neither internal dynamics nor interaction. The resulting talk about a 'crisis' entails a confined discourse that has no eye for the material and historical contexts that

4 Martin Stollery notes how studies on Arab men ignore agency or the "spectrum of activity" (Stollery 2001: 50), referring to Nancy Lindisfarne (1994). In her essay, Lindisfarne argues that studies on the Mediterranean have often been restricted to the concepts of honor and shame, "ignoring the shifting reality of people's experience as gendered beings" (Lindisfarne 1994: 82). The fact that my main interest is not how honor and shame are defined and their representations possibly work in the films, this does not mean that they will be entirely ignored in the analysis of the films – the point is that I do not consider them as the only or main defining factors in male identity construction.

5 In trying to explain the Arab revolts, Amar argues, Western news outlets regularly resorted to simplistic explanations of these uprisings as the result of angry young (Arab) men. This conclusion, however, failed to notice the gender dynamics 'on the square' and the wide participation (and sometimes also leadership) of women in the protests. In Western logic – imbued with notions of hypermasculine Arab men and oppressed Arab women – it was and sometimes still is inconceivable of thinking otherwise.

construct and are constructed by popular imaginations of masculinity. These politics of gender live alongside a continuous challenge of normatization of class and generational conflicts as well, as the 2010-'11 uprisings have shown us. Yet, research on men and masculinities has continued to suffer from an uncritical approach to masculinity. My research project tries to change this neglect, which is why the main question here is focused on how Egyptian cinema establishes norms or rather critically opposes and deconstructs them.

In his article *Gender (and) Imperialism*, Waïl Hassan (2003) argues along the same line as Amar, stating that African (and Arab) men are depicted as hypermasculine subjects. Simultaneously, and contradictory to that hypermasculine subject, twentieth century colonialism and orientalism as well as contemporary imperialism emasculates those same men and eventually takes away any possibility for agency. Hassan deconstructs the popular (Western) discourse from a postcolonial and racial perspective, and thus adopts several approaches. The double and contradictory position which African men are placed in is critiqued and questioned applying Judith Butler's critique of gender performance (as inherently constructed) but also redefining postcolonial studies. He argues that in order to deconstruct hegemonic masculinity and question its constructed nature, we also need to pay attention to the neocolonialist dynamics that reinforce and justify a patriarchal subjugation of both men *and* women (id. 321). Fighting one form of hegemony by establishing and enforcing a new form of hegemony does not result in liberation and gender-equality. Such battles against racial, gender, class and generational hegemony continue to be visualized also in Egyptian films, but particularly in the last decade class has become the major distinctive feature defining representations of hegemonic and subversive masculinities in Egyptian cinema.

It is my intention in this research to include not only the external instigators that contribute to a construction of masculine identities – whether in crisis or not – but also at internal inconsistencies of masculine identities, specifically of hegemonic masculinity. We will see that these inconsistencies have always been visualized in Egyptian cinema, arguing for the need to study popular film. In the following

part I discuss men's studies in the Middle East and North Africa, which cover a diverse set of topics such as health and body (reproduction, circumcision, bodily acts, muscularity), men's relation with state and oppression, their relation with other men, dress and public behavior, their relation with women, and historical roles of men.

2.2 Masculinity and Men studies

Masculinity and men's studies in the Arab world are still in their early phase. Most research about masculinity is anthropological. Within this discipline, some studies focus on the historicity of masculinity as well as historical (idealized) appearances of maleness. Most of these works are descriptive and essentialist (El-Messiri 1978; Gilmore 1990). Homa Hoodfar (1999) and Salwa Isma'il (2009) do not only focus on men and masculinity but analyze how gender politics create specific male and female urban spaces while keeping in mind the relationship between men and women on one side, institutions and institutionalized practices and the state on the other side. Julie Peteet (1994) studies new forms of 'rites of passage' in occupied Palestine which suffers from military arbitrariness singling out many (young) men who are then tortured and beaten in Israeli prisons. She argues that, as such, these beatings and detentions are part of men constructing their masculine identity (id.: 31). A new publication by Farha Ghannam (2013) fills up a continuing gap in anthropological research about contemporary Egyptian society, focusing on masculine identities in a post-2011 and post-Mubarak Egypt. Ghannam's study questions the construction of male identities, in relation to women, other men and the state, gendering Egyptian men and acknowledging individual agency.

Institutionalized forms of masculinity and rites of passage also return in Ghoussoub and Sinclair-Webb's anthology *Imagined Masculinities* (2000). Essays in this anthology discuss circumcision (Bouhdiba and Khal, Bilu) and military service (Sinclair-Webb, Kaplan) or resistance (Peteet) as rites of passage. The second part of the anthology examines historical writings about male homosexuality (Lagrange) or theorizes the reception of 'women stories' (Najmabadi).

Ghoussoub writes about the creation of a national image of masculinity, as does Saghieh when he analyzes images of Saddam Hussein in newspapers or on billboards throughout Iraq. Walter Armbrust studies one of Egypt's most famous and masculine actors, Farid Shawqi. Armbrust uses a historical and star studiesapproach for the analysis, distinguishing between the actor's stage character and his real life persona analyzing both his films and his appearances in fan magazines of the era. Armbrust's analysis of this actor's star persona – and the mechanics that are involved in the production and consumption of meaning – is the first to offer a productive idea of masculinity in film. His work will prove pivotal to this research on masculine performances in Egyptian cinema.

Sherifa Zuhur (2003) likewise adopts a historical method to depict the particular romantic masculinity of Farid al-Atrash, a famous actor and singer from the early days of Egyptian cinema (1940s-60s). She notes how he resorted to a romantic Arab and Islamic image of masculinity put in a modern context through his performances on stage and the silver screen. Farid al-Atrash's masculine performance on screen was recognizable as the romantic hero from Arab folk tales and poems, such as the story *Majnun Layla*, or the love story about 'Antara and 'Abla.[6] Another study on a specific masculine type is Wilson Chacko Jacob's article (2007) on the *futuwwa* (see also chapter 7).[7] In it, he discusses the eventual decline of the tough guy masculinity that the *futuwwa* represented in a changing historical

6 The origins of the story of *Majnun Layla* are not entirely certain, although they could date back to the 7th century. As a medieval story in an oral tradition, the contents have continued to change. But one essential element remains central to the story: the untenable love of Qays for Layla. Similarly, 'Antara was an Arab poet, and the son of a slave woman and a nobleman. But apart from that, popular culture remembers him for his superhuman strength and chivalry.

7 The concept of *futuwwa* has a long history, dating back to the 8th century. In its most basic meaning, it was initially complementary to *muruwwa*, which stood for values and qualities of adult men whereas *futuwwa* was reserved for the qualities of the young man (*fatā*). In this research – and I return to the specific male type in chapter 7 – the meaning is closely related to the descriptions found in the novels by Nagib Mahfuz, on which the films were based.

context, rendering its very existence unnecessary in early 20th century Egyptian society (Jacob 2007: 690). In the same vein, he writes about a new hegemonic form of masculinity in colonial Egypt (Jacob 2010, 2011) – the effendi masculinity – from the perspective of gender performance.[8] This effendi masculinity was constructed around its concern about its health and looks, a similar argument Kholoussy (2010a) makes.

Kholoussy examined the Egyptian (colonized) state's interest in single men's health and sexuality in order to create a strong, healthy and disciplined population "that would serve as the foundation for a postcolonial nation free of socio-medical ills" (Kholoussy 2010a: 677). Research on masculinity from a health and medical perspective was also advanced by Inhorn (2003). Her essay maps the reaction of men towards infertility in a deeply patriarchal society that encourages them not only to get married but also to produce offspring. But Inhorn proves that male infertility results in paradoxes within a presumed rigid patriarchy. She argues that it is often women who take the blame publicly and who suffer the most from their husband's 'crisis of masculinity' (id. 253) resulting from their inability to reproduce. In Egypt, where men are at the forefront of the family and are supposed to accept responsibility for their actions, the result is women fighting their husbands' battle against social derision.

Not only anthropological, historical or social and health research but also postcolonial and regional studies have tended to masculinities in the Middle East and North Africa. I already mentioned Armbrust (2000) and Jacob (2007, 2010, and 2011) who addressed particular types of masculinity (*futuwwa*, effendi) which were heterosexual hegemonic masculinities. Murray and Roscoe's anthology (1997) centers on

8 For a different take on effendiyya in the first half of the 20th century, see also Lucie Ryzova's *Egyptianizing Modernity through the 'New Effendiyya'* (in Re-Envisioning Egypt, 2005). In it she argues that oftentimes the effendiyya are either considered as a cultural group or a social class. She describes them in ways they defined themselves as a group, through a reading of popular media like films and magazines. The educated effendiyya were active consumers and producers of these media and as such they can be used as a source of information on how they viewed themselves. For Ryzova, the effendiyya are the new educated middle classes, but also those classes that were associated with impoverished males in the late 20s and 30s of the 20th century.

homosexuality in Islamic history and culture, including an analysis of descriptions of homosexuality in classical Arabic, Persian and Turkish literature. El-Rouayheb (2009) takes it a step further, arguing that the modern-day concept of a homosexual identity (different from homosexual practices) did not exist universally or indefinitely. He re-reads and deconstructs Ottoman-period Arabic texts (roughly 1500-1800) that talk about same-sex relations and intercourse from a post-colonial and gender perspective. He argues that Arabic literature in that period lacked this contemporary (and Western) concept of a homosexual identity (id. 6) but did accept its utterance in literary form, as proven in classical Arabic poetry and literature (id. 4).[9] His study questions the generalizability of a homosexual identity as a relatively new, Western, concept that is sometimes also taken as 'the norm' for homosexual identities across cultures and histories.

Joseph Massad (2002) perhaps initialized the critical questioning of a 'globalized homosexuality' in the Middle East, arguing that "it is the discourse of the Gay International that both produces homosexuals, as well as gays and lesbians, where they do not exist, and represses same-sex desires and practices that refuse to be assimilated into its sexual epistemology" (Massad 2002: 363). It might sound like too strong a claim, arguing that homosexuality did not exist before in the Arab world, but perhaps we should look at it from a non-Western perspective in terms of that homosexual identity and the discourse that constructs and surrounds it. Similar to El-Rouayheb, Massad questions a universalized homosexual identity. This way, his claim is still valid, since a Western concept of homosexuality and a homosexual

9 There are many more studies on homosexualities in an Islamic or Arab (or both) context. I have only listed a few here, but other noteworthy studies on homosexualities include Stephen Murray's 2000 study *Homosexualities*, which includes a few chapters on different homosexualities in Islamic societies from the past. Scott Kugle studies Islamic texts and how they treat homosexuality from a religious perspective. J. W. Wright and Everett Rowson's anthology contains articles on representations of homoeroticism in classical Arabic literature. For an extensive postcolonial critique of some of the studies written about deviant sexualities in Islamic and Arab cultures, I strongly recommend Joseph Massad's *Desiring Arabs* (2007). El-Rouayheb's *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic world* (2005) is of particular interest in a postcolonial and post-orientalist context as well.

identity cannot and should not be taken as a universal and historical fact. This notion is important to remember when watching Egyptian films and analyzing their gender representations and representational practices as well. Just like 'contemporary' homosexuality is considered a modern construct, so are present-day discourses about masculinity in general.

Massad has further developed this line of thinking and traces it back to orientalist depictions of the 'East', with which he generally means the Arabic speaking Middle East.[10] In *Desiring Arabs* (Massad 2007) he looks back at Arabic literature which depicted same-sex desire and discussed sexuality, thus historically contextualizing the current discourses on sexuality and sexual identity in the region. In the next parts of his book, he argues that modernist and contemporary Arabic literature and academic studies about sexual identities were influenced by orientalist depictions of a 'licentious East', whose past was then considered backward by enlightened Arab intellectuals. Again, this constitutes a warning for the current study about representations of masculinity; one cannot approach representations of 1960s men without placing these films in their historical and social contexts. When analyzing images of masculinities and men, one also needs to be aware of the fact that these representations were made in a particular context to a certain effect.

We have seen that gender studies in the Arab world, as a development within women's studies, has suffered from its own orientalist assumptions of men in the Middle East and North Africa. Many studies have continued to approach Arab men from the same angles as other disciplines were used to, like anthropology and women's studies. Theoretical approaches and methods have started to open up, with studies that question a presumed masculine norm and male identities. These studies no longer approach 'Arab men' as a monolith detached from a social and historical context, but rather

10 This is a serious point of critique on both Joseph Massad's and his mentor, Edward Said's, work. In *Orientalism* Edward Said deconstructs Orientalist depictions of the 'East', which he usually identifies with the Middle East only, falling essentially – according to his critics – in the same trap as the orientalists he criticizes. Nevertheless, I do not think it lessens his argument; on the contrary, it rather strengthens it.

acknowledge the complex dynamics at work in any society, which I will tend to in more detail soon. Furthermore, it is essential to stop defining Arab men in terms of their presumed identification with larger group structures or with the stereotypical role of men as patriarchs, effectively disarming their agency *as men*.

As becomes clear from this overview of studies on masculinity in Arab societies, they have mostly tended to describing different *forms* of masculinity in different *eras*, without questioning identity politics or politics of representations of different masculinities. As some of these studies show, the concern with a 'healthy' image of men grew in colonial times but is still present to this day. Looking at Inhorn's study, it is clear that men's health is considered an essential requirement to protect the nation from foreign invasion or mingling in its internal issues. The 2005 film *Laylat Suqut Baghdad/The Night Baghdad Fell* (Muhammad Amin) returns to this issue as well, with a youth failing sexually (and thus emasculated) because of his fear of foreign invasion in Arab lands by the (masculinized) American army, represented by American male (and female!) soldiers. But as Kandiyoti (1994) argues, foreign involvement in Arab countries and Western neocolonialism is not a sufficient explanation for a presumed crisis in masculinity. This film, too, hints at self-critique when it becomes clear that the sexually impaired youth has suffered all his life from social norms repressing not only his sexuality and his need to explore his body, but also his personal development as a student, a man, and an Egyptian.

I wish to steer clear of any form of universalizing and essentialist understanding of masculinity that too often approaches (Arab) masculinities from a culturalist or behaviorist angle and ultimately results in mere descriptions of different forms of masculinity, either demonizing Arab men or apologetically redeeming 'them' as victimized *others*. Instead, I propose an inclusive approach towards Arab masculinity and men's studies. Similar to a few of the arguments made earlier in this chapter, I believe it is necessary to have a look at the contexts that contribute to the construction of masculine identities.

First, on a local level, these contexts would include but are not limited to studies of relationships between men and other men as well

as women, encounters with the state and their relation to political, legal, social and religious authorities. Second is on a global level, including studies on the effects of imperialism and neocolonialism, as well as men's place in an increasingly competitive global economy. Third are the institutions and social structures that shape and give form to masculine identities, such as circumcision and marriage, the army and the police (which also relate to encounters with the state). Fourth are studies that focus on men's health and their bodies and the way they construct their masculine identities as men, how they perform them physically. This research project falls within the fifth sphere: an analysis of cultural products and other meaning-producing institutions, such as magazines, film, television, music and music videos. This research analyzes the way Arab men are represented in popular media and how this shapes and is shaped by general perceptions about men and what is deemed masculine in Egypt. In general, articles and comments on blogs and websites are also used to complement the textual reading of the films. In the following part, I will highlight a number of studies available on Egyptian and Arab cinemas.

2.3 Film studies

Egyptian film studies – and more generally also Arab film studies – are perhaps undergoing a similar development as gender studies in the wider region, in the sense that only recently studies are emerging that go beyond the purely structuralist approaches describing historical developments in cinema production contexts. Viola Shafik (1998, 2007) has been one of the first to offer a comprehensive study of Egyptian and Arab cinemas and she too comments on the limited approaches in research on Arab cinema. Many studies about Egyptian cinema – specially in Arabic – are available, but she states that this research tends to be historical in nature and overemphasizes topics like films' images of women – focusing on stereotypes – without taking into account many of the elements responsible for creating meaning in media texts (Shafik 2007: 7). In other words, she argues for a cultural

studies approach to Egyptian and Arab film studies considering the multiplicity of factors partaking in the creation of meaning.

Viola Shafik's *Arab cinema: History and cultural identity* (1998) offers a concise history of cinema in the Arab world. Although she realizes that there is no one, united, 'Arab cinema' (Shafik 1998: 1), she still continues to use the singular both in her title and the rest of her book. The reason for this is that she is looking at the production of feature films, or in general the cinema industry in the Arab world. The 'label' implies other questions, however, about what to include or exclude from 'Arab cinema'? Does this entail Arab diaspora films, or only films made in a majority Arabic speaking country? What about Berber-language films, for example? And what kind of 'Arab cinema' are we talking about: the limited number of art-house films that Roy Armes[11] discusses or the popular and commercial Egyptian products? What is 'Arab' about 'Arab cinema', then? Certainly not Egyptian cinema's own stereotypical representations of Egyptian Bedouins as irrational backward brutes or emotionally charged women in, for example, the comedy *Li-'l-Rigal Faqat/For Men Only* (Mahmud Dhu al-Fiqar 1964). Shafik leaves these questions unanswered.

Yet, I would argue that, in the sense of constructing an Egyptian cultural identity, commercial films have played and continue to play an important role. Ever since the 'start' of an Egyptian cinema *industry* when Tala'at Harb Pasha erected the Studio Misr, the cinema industry has become a structural element of the Egyptian struggle to assert itself as a national Egyptian identity on a cultural and political scene. Ifdal Elsaket's study (n.d.) focuses entirely on the pre-revolutionary cinema in Egypt and how it contributed to the construction and dissemination of a national identity with images of progress and modernity that filmmakers and critics propagated to the outside world as much as to the nation itself (id. n.d.). As a modern form of art, cinema was part and parcel of the construction of a modern national

11 Roy Armes systematically ignores commercial Egyptian films, instead only looking at the more 'artistically and critically acclaimed' films, which in Egypt coincides mostly with Youssef Chahine's films and a handful of films from other directors.

Egyptian identity trying to answer the question of what the modern nation should look like.

Most Arabic language studies of Egyptian (or Arab) cinema tend to remain descriptive about historical developments of genres and styles in Egyptian cinema (e.g. Abu Shadi 1998) without reference to wider discourses prevalent at the time. Only recently more varied approaches have emerged, most notably Fayruz Karawya's research (2011) on the different ways in depicting *sha'bi* (local, popular) neighborhoods. She distinguishes between the comedic *sha'bi* neighborhoods, often studio-built like *al-Limbi* (Sharif 'Arafa 2002), and the more 'serious' depictions of films like *Hina Maysara/Until Things Get Better* (Khalid Yusif 2007). She claims that the cinema's increased interest (and particularly so after the making of *al-Limbi*) in lower class and 'haphazard' (*'ashwā'ī*) neighborhoods is a starting attempt to counter middle- and upper-class domination of cultural products, and among those, the cinema industry (Karawya 2011: 16), with producers like al-Subki and films such as *al-Limbi* or more recently the trilogy made with popular young actor Muhammad Ramadan. Simultaneously, filmmakers behind certain other films are part of an educated middle (and upper-) class (such as Khalid Yusif), representing lower class areas as they see it, reiterating and contributing to prevalent discourses about those same lower class neighborhoods as dangerous and unstable hotbeds for extremists and social violence. In chapter 8 I will return specifically to a number of films promulgating this discourse.[12]

12 Egyptian cinema has always shown interest in portraying lower class areas: from the 'contemporaneous' representations of lower class historical areas in the 30s and 40s, to the plights of the poor citizen (and peasants) in the 50s and 60s' socialist-inspired films portraying a pre-1952 feudal society, to the representations of traditional, historical areas in a "time before the rule of law" in the 80s, to finally the representations of the danger and extremism so 'rampant' in present-day *'ashwā'iyyāt* ('haphazard areas', see also chapter 8). Class differences have always played a central part in Egyptian cinema, the way they're represented depends on the specific era we are studying. Viola Shafik (2007: 274) argues that 80s and 90s' portrayals of people walking on the margin of society and becoming the country's nouveau riche are reminiscent of bourgeois fears of not being able to recognize lower classes and having to share their privileged social status.

Nahid Salah's study (2012) focuses on representations (and the increase and diversity in the number of representations) of *futuwwa* in Egyptian films and how this relates to a discourse in Egyptian society on the meaning of *futuwwa*. She argues that the most common film that is usually referred to as a framework for *futuwwa*-films is *al-Futuwwa/The Tough Guy* (Salah Abu Sayf 1956). But she claims it has no relation to the 'real' meaning of *futuwwa,* which is that of a more chivalrous variety of masculinity (Salah 2012: 61). Her analysis shows, however, that she does not question the fixed, ahistorical concept of *futuwwa*, neither does she explain the possible reasons behind the proliferation of this specific type, either in the 50s film or in the 80s. At the end of her study, Salah includes three frameworks for representing *futuwwa* in more recent Egyptian films as opposed to the 'formative' period of the 1950s for *futuwwa*-films. Nevertheless her argument is unconvincing, and exposes her structuralist, essentialist and positivist approach to this ambiguous masculine ideal. In chapter 7 I will go into more detail with regard to this specific male type that became prominent in historical films from the 1980s.

A number of English language works have also started theorizing about Arab and Egyptian cinema, notably Viola Shafik's work, but also Malek Khouri's study (2010) on the life and work of Egypt's *enfant terrible*, Youssef Chahine. In it, Khouri approaches Youssef Chahine's films as a body of films, an oeuvre spanning the lifetime of the director. Furthermore, Khouri has theorized a very important period in Arab cinema, the artistic rebirth of the 1990s and early 2000s, the so-called *New Arab Cinema* (Khouri 2005). Malek Khouri (2005) considers the *Nahḍa* period in the 19th century a formative period. *Al-Nahḍa* is often translated as Renaissance in English, although that does not cover its meaning.[13]

Khouri considers *al-Nahḍa* as formative for the modern Arab state, through renewing Arab and Muslim heritage (literature, history, language), the reappraisal of classical Arabic and adjusting it to

13 The Arab *Nahḍa* has an inherently political, anti-colonial agenda out of which the need arose for a cultural and intellectual renewal turning back to an Arab and Islamic heritage. Although initially making use of scientific advances made in Europe, it grew more self-conscious in the first part of the 20th century.

modern needs,[14] reconnecting the arts with social history and stressing their importance in the fight against colonial occupation (first directed against the Ottoman Turks, later against the major colonizers of the region, the British and the French). According to Khouri's framework, modernity in the Arab world thus entails a strong political awareness, nationalism and self-consciousness. Khouri's claims are similar to Armbrust's (1995), although Armbrust does not necessarily distinguish between the 'vulgar' commercial films made earlier and the artistic revival of the 80s and 90s with a handful of critically acclaimed films, that Khouri considers representative of the new cinema.

Walter Armbrust's 1995 article on the 'codes of modernity' in Egyptian film is an essential starting point for the theorizing of representational politics in the Arab world's most popular cinema industry. In the article, Armbrust argues that "in fact there is a language of Egyptian cinema common to both commercial and art films" (Armbrust 1995: 83). This language situates itself on "the same ideological map [and] as a whole constitutes a fund of images shared by audience and directors" (id. 83). These images of modernity, 'codes of modernity' as he calls them, constitute meaning producing elements within a discourse of nationalism and a modern vision for the nation, an ideological construct he labels the "myth of modernity" (id. 93). These codes are positive and negative depictions of the local and the foreign, the traditional and the modern. Certain local traditions and values are depicted positively and uphold a certain essence of Egyptian identity. Simultaneously they are juxtaposed to images of backwardness and oppression stemming from a lack of modern education. The imagery of modern education is coded positively as Western and the scientific advances made in the West can be adapted to help create a modern nation. But, the West is also associated with imperialism and injustice, coded as negative. Throughout the analysis, these codes will form the background to understanding the elements that contribute to the production of meaning.

14 Concerning the modernization of classical Arabic language, new research has shown that in Egypt (and likely in other countries as well, though research is lacking) the development of colloquial Egyptian dialect and its use in popular culture and means of communication (pamphlets, magazines) also contributed to the construction of a national identity (Fahmy 2011).

Taking into consideration here Wilson Jacob's study on a new form of effendi masculinity that came about in the early 20th century, we realize that this modernity was accompanied by new discourses on the body, the self, sexuality and the nation. The late 19th and early 20th century proved pivotal for the construction of a national image in which a re-assessment of gender relations was central. With the emergence of new classes (the effendiyya, see Ryzova 2005 and Jacob 2010, 2011), new discourses on gender relations emerged as well (Badran 1996; Elsadda 2006, 2007). But another period in Egyptian film production rather than the 19th century modernist discourses, also proved pivotal to understanding the developments in filmmaking techniques and styles of the 80s and 90s.

Nouri Bouzid (1995, translated by Shereen el Ezabi) has theorized the emergence of new realism in Arab cinemas, from North Africa to the Levant, which he linked to the 1967 defeat. He chooses the 1967 *naksa* (setback; in the Six Day War) – although he calls the event *hazima* or *defeat* – as a decisive point in history which thoroughly changed Arab societies and – as a consequence – also Arab cinemas following that war. Bouzid argues that since the defeat in '67 Arab audiences started to question the military regimes and, particularly for Egypt, the socialist ideology that 'Abd al-Nasir proposed. Therefore, for a couple of years during al-Sadat's early reign (from 1971-'73), all films addressing the defeat were prohibited, including for example Youssef Chahine's *al-'Asfur/The Sparrow* (1971) (Shafik 1998: 35). Bouzid argues that because of this defeat, a new generation of film makers stood up with new ideas and styles, often labeled 'New Realism', in the 1970s and early 1980s.[15]

Perhaps in anticipation of Nagib's argument about the ethics of realism in world cinema (see chapter 3), Bouzid states about realism in Arab cinemas that "New Realism, then, is not a form but a specific content that has a form; it is concerned with reality. [...] In this interaction, reality is the dominant force, stubbornly refusing

15 Not to be confused with the '*New Cinema Group*' from the early 1970s (*Jamā'at al-Sīnima al-Jadīda*) to which several directors in the Arab world subscribed, arguing for a radical change in filmmaking. Through radically new styles and ways of storytelling, film was to be used as a vehicle for social change as well.

anything but a meticulously truthful representation" (Bouzid 1995: 249). With this definition, New Realism comprises different genres and styles, as long as it stays true to reality – whatever the director's impression about that reality may be. Bouzid betrays here his conviction that the camera's purpose is an unaltered representation of the world. In this way, the culturally 'Western' phenomenon of cinema can be appropriated by filmmakers worldwide, offering opportunities to represent their own cultural identities.

Although most of the films analyzed in this study would probably not entirely subscribe to Bouzid's definition of realism – indeed, popular Egyptian cinema's melodramatic features sometimes paradoxically undermine the films' possible social critiques – realism nevertheless remains a powerful element in most films. Abu-Lughod named Egyptian television serials' aesthetic "development realism [which] idealizes education, progress, and modernity within the nation" (Abu-Lughod 2005: 81). This form of realism, as part of a state effort to 'educate' the nation, is also visible in films, more strongly prior to '67, more subversively after. The subversion of the middle class ideals of modernism and education is what defines later cinema productions in a way that could be described as anti-modernist (Armbrust 1995: 105).

To conclude, I see an interesting progress in historical studies about film. The available studies remain limited, but they have developed from a structural discussion on film styles and genres over the course of history (Malkmus and Armes 1991; Farid 1992, 2005; Abu Shady 1998) into a more contextualized reading, putting film production in a broad historical framework (Bouzid 1995; al-Tilmisani 1995; Armbrust 1995, 2000; Khouri 2005; Shafik 2007; Karawya 2011). These studies link the developments and changes in styles and elements to changing sociopolitical situations in a specifically Arab context. As such, films prove to be interesting and informative historical documents, testimonies of their times, relics of the past, but also producers of meaning in the present.

2.4 Gendered representations

As becomes clear from the research mentioned above, the study of men and masculinities in the Middle East – and indeed, gender in general as well – consists of a wide array of disciplines and adopts multiple approaches. But it is important to note that the analysis of masculinities in media texts is linked to "their relationship to wider patterns of cultural dissemination of issues concerning masculinity" (Edwards 2006: 139). Thus, let us turn to those studies that have focused on representational practices in art of the region – whether representations of class, gender, or the nation, either in books, historical documents, television or films – placing these representational practices in their respective contexts. Depictions of masculinities and representational practices in general have been studied in a variety of images and texts, from billboards and mass media (Sa'd 1998; Rohde 2006), through literature (Hassan 2003; Rahman 2003; Najmabadi 2005, Ouzgane 2011), to cinema (Schochat 1983; Armbrust 1998a; Menicucci 1998; Stollery 2001; Shafik 2007; Mostafa 2009; Khouri 2010; Karawya 2011; Salah 2012) and television (Salamandra 1998; Abu-Lughod 1993, 2005; Sakr 2004).

An historical approach is used by Garay Menicucci in his *Unlocking the Arab celluloid closet: Homosexuality in Egyptian film* (1998). Menicucci lists several noteworthy representations of homosexuality in Egyptian cinema from its beginning, although focusing only on explicit depictions of non-normative sexualities and cross-dressing. Menicucci concludes, however, that Arab societies are becoming more and more conservative, which means fewer representations of 'deviations'. While his article is handy to have a list of films tackling sexual taboos, he does not offer a very detailed reading of the relation between the enormous changes Egyptian society was undergoing in the 1990s (stronger implementation of neoliberal economic policies, a violent crackdown on an increasingly violent opposition to a corrupt government, a general 'dogmatization' of religion)[16] and the

16 The nineties were characterized by violence towards what was perceived as an increasingly corrupt government and society, resulting in terrorist attacks in Luxor in 1997 and a stronger crackdown on 'extremists' (who were often

developments in Egyptian filmmaking. Instead he only describes the different forms of representations of non-normative sexualities and how it has changed over time. His conclusion that a more conservative society offers fewer possibilities for representations of non-normative sexualities I do not share. On the contrary it seems to become more polarized instead with certain films breaking taboos in a stronger no-nonsense way. Further, a study on the more covert depictions of non-normative sexualities, or indeed, a queer reading of Egyptian films, is not yet available.

Although Menicucci claims that representations of non-normative sexualities are declining in an increasingly more conservative society, there are several films that represent non-normative sexualities quite starkly (and differently). The 1993 film *Mercedes* (Yusri Nasrallah) is an example of a film that depicts a homosexual type in a rather different way. A young man from a bourgeois family decides to leave behind his family's obstructing way of life and goes to live together with his lover in an underground gay community. Contrary to recurring images of effeminate gay men – like in the newest addition to a gay film-'genre', *Asrar 'A'iliyya/Family Secrets* (Hani Fawzi 2014) – Nasrallah's film portrays them as 'normal', though marginalized, young men who like football and are tough and masculine. The film *'Imarat Ya'qubian/The Yaqoubian Building* (Marwan Hamid 2006) also has a gay character in it who is a respected member of the community, in spite of also being obviously effeminate and leaving no doubt about his sexual identity. Both *Family Secrets* and *The Yaqoubian Building* perpetuate common perceptions in Egypt that homosexuality is an 'affliction' caused by childhood traumas like incest or rape, or the absence of a male role-model. Khalid Yusif's film *Hina Maysara/Till Things Get Better* also

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political opponents) from the side of the government. Other attacks on Egyptian intellectuals include the attack on Nagib Mahfuz (1994) and the case against Nasr Abu Zayd in 1993 which resulted in him being labeled an infidel. In general, the political, economic, and – as a result – the cultural and intellectual situation in Egypt was in a disastrous state, which would only minimally improve on the surface throughout the 2000s with the country's new economic course encouraging foreign investment. The GDP grew, but class disparity also grew exponentially. At this moment, an estimated 25% lives in poverty, not counting the numerous people who fall short of being considered poor (the poverty threshold is 1.25$/day).

portrayed a gay character, albeit a woman, which continues to be a greater taboo than male homosexuality. The character, a female pimp played by actress Ghada 'Abd al-Raziq, only plays a small, yet not insignificant part in the film. The short lesbian scene, which lasts no longer than a few seconds, sparked harsh comments about the film's 'morals'.[17]

Walter Armbrust (1998) points out a valid reason for this continuous tackling of taboos in Egyptian cinema. He analyzed the representations of sex and marriage in Egyptian cinema and shows that 'Golden Age' films (1940s-1960s) often challenge patriarchal norms, advancing notions of romantic love in a society that largely adhered to a concept of marriage as a union between families in the first place, and a union between two individuals secondly. Armbrust thus links the representations of marriage and sex in films to a wider discourse in a society which has changed because of the huge increase in population in Egypt in the last 60 years, and because of the more frequent participation of women in public life (and therefore a greater emphasis on the more 'modern' concept of romantic love, binding individuals instead of families). As such, some films continue in their efforts to challenge patriarchal notions of marriage and love.

A different approach to a similar argument is Martin Stollery's article (2001) on representations of masculinities and particularly father-son relationships in Tunisian cinema. Stollery approaches the study of masculinity from a set of theoretical assumptions about North African society, including the argument that the state is essentially structured according to the family, with a strong patriarch heading the nation (id. 50), which is effectively feminized. He admits though that these are mere generalizations, overlooking the individual experience as well as possible sites of resistance – like cinema can be (id. 50). Stollery furthermore invokes Kandiyoti's argument that focuses on the power relations between hegemonic and subordinated masculinities as well as between genders (id. 51, referring to Kandiyoti 1994). By looking at the possible subversion in films vis-à-vis actions (i.e.

17 From al-Arabiya.net, 4 January 2008.

metanarratives versus individual plot developments), he aims to deconstruct the narratives and lay bare the potential for change.

I would like to turn my attention here to one important and informative recent study on representations of masculinity and men in the Arab East. Samira Aghacy's study *Masculine identity in the fiction of the Arab East since 1967* (2009) questions gender and sexuality through a historical and cultural studies approach to the representation of masculinity. She scrutinizes representations of masculinities in Arabic novels within the context of social, political and economic changes. In the introduction she writes that she takes into account the different wars and their effects on – among other things – masculinity, gender roles, and sexuality (id.: 2) whose discursive practices have been strongly influenced by those events. She thus reads the texts within a local, historical context including a reference to major international events influencing social and political structures in Arab societies, while questioning prevalent discourses about gender and sexuality at the time.

Aghacy approaches masculinity as a process, constantly changing and changed: "[t]he argument that runs through the book questions the assumption that male identity is characterized by strong boundaries and reveals these boundaries to be porous and permeable" (Aghacy 2009: 3). She understands gender performance in the semiotic sense, as an interaction, an identity one assumes in relation to others around him/her. These others also contribute to an understanding of the 'self', as the gendered subject positions itself within the larger structures of gender relations. But institutions (such as circumcision, marriage, the army, etc.), historical events, society and cultural products all contribute to an understanding of masculinity in a particular time and place, favoring certain configurations of masculinity over others. Aghacy invokes Judith Butler's (1990) arguments in her approach to the study of masculinities, showing that "gender performances are in accordance with socially constituted norms and patterns of masculinity and femininity" (Aghacy 2009: 4). The outcome is that masculine performances – similar to femininity – are exposed as a masquerade, or in Butler's words: "an appearing that makes itself convincing as a 'being'" (Butler 1990: 47).

Gender thus shows itself as an inherently unstable element of one's identity in these novels. Aghacy deconstructs a presumed gender stability – often explained through an ahistoric version of the patriarch (for example how Stollery explained the Arab state which continues to represent itself and is represented as a 'benign father') – which is threatened in the current political environment in which men move around. Deconstructing the novelists' descriptions of a hegemonic masculinity, she contests that the assumed "plurality of masculinities, in the *sociopolitical* sense of the word, is already in existence in the fiction of the Arab East" (id. 18, emphasis mine). But, although novels question a presumed stable hegemonic masculinity, through subversion, resistance, or opposition, these non-hegemonic masculinities are nevertheless *othered* and show that hegemonic masculinity is in crisis in its current (since 1967) social and political environment. Aghacy links the reasons for this 'crisis' to a quickly changing society in the light of – first and foremost – the 1967 *naksa*, as well as subsequent attacks and occupations of the Arab homeland by foreign invaders, an increasing presence of women in the public sphere, and a very competitive economic environment. Aghacy's interest in these different aspects forming new social relations – both locally and globally – are what Kandiyoti (1994) also asked for when analyzing performances of masculinity (or femininity). In the next chapters, I will outline the theoretical concepts and methodology that have shaped and enabled this study on masculine performances and representations of men in Egyptian cinema.

2.5 Conclusion

The study of gender in Arab societies as well as its representations in culture is shown to be an inherently interdisciplinary endeavor. The recent publication of Tarik Sabry's *Arab Cultural Studies* (2012) is a good example of this interdisciplinarity that showcases different approaches to studying culture – "as a system of meaning" (Matar 2012: 123) – in the Arab world. Theories and approaches from a variety of fields, like anthropology, history, political and media studies are all relevant and offer different and complimentary readings for the

analysis of cultural products and constructs of gender. An interdisciplinary approach is necessary when questioning, discussing and addressing any cultural product or society, particularly if we assume a general discourse that is prevalent in a certain time and space.

Yet, masculinity and men studies in general suffer from limited methodologies and a lack of theorizing (Hearn 2013: 26, 35-6). When we are to apply feminist and queer theories to the study of men and masculinities, we need to do so critically and take into account the privileged position of the research subject (men) as well as the particularities of Arab men and masculinities. Western feminist theory, constructed in a specific social and material context, cannot be assigned to Arab men without adapting it and taking into account material differences. These differences do not only relate to defining gender, class and race; they also have implications on a global level, as different hegemonic masculinities now compete locally and globally (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Furthermore, the privileged position of the researcher needs equally critical reflection. I am aware of this advantage, not only as a researcher, but also as a white male, coming from an academic and social context privileging white men.

The present research aims to contribute to this lack of theorizing about masculinities in the region and in Egypt (see also chapter 3.2), as well as about meaning producing elements in the country's cinema industry (see chapter 3.1). With the exception of a few studies, most tend to approach Egyptian cinema in structuralist terms without considering its wider implications and elements participating in the construction of meaning. The point here is to question and deconstruct prevalent discourses and ideologies and lay bare the industry's potential for change. In the next chapters I will outline in more details the theoretical framework that envelops this research – which I have only hinted at in this chapter – and clarify several key concepts of gender and film studies and how they are used in the analysis of the chosen films.

3. Theoretical concepts

In order to answer the questions posited in this research I need to situate the films within a discussion on world cinema as well as clarify how concepts like masculinity, gender and gender performance, patriarchy, and representational practices are understood and used in the analysis. This research, which is inherently interdisciplinary, cannot be limited to one theoretical framework. As such, it draws on theories and key concepts from different disciplines, mainly those of gender and masculinity studies, queer studies, postcolonial and cultural studies. In this chapter I will explain these theoretical concepts as I will be using them in the analysis of the films and their representational practices to be able to deconstruct notions of masculine normativity.

Masculinity studies in the Arab region and in Egypt in particular, are only slowly starting to get attention, as is clear from the literature review. But what has also become clear from this review is the interdisciplinary nature of the available studies. In terms of representations of masculinities in Egyptian films, this automatically involves taking into account many different theoretical approaches. To be able to historically place these different types of representations, I will have to look at material and structural elements contributing to a construction of certain dominant images of masculinity. But this research will also take into account the different power relations that are constructed, contested, maintained, adjusted or – perhaps – abolished in favor of a novel "system of representations" (Hall 1997: 17-9). The analyzed films and other media are all part of this system that at once produces meaning but also constitutes possibilities for the consumption of these products.

3.1 Egyptian cinema in the world

First and foremost, there is a necessity to situate Egyptian cinema in the world. Egyptian and Arab filmmaking suffer from a lack of

theorizing, far behind many other so-called "world cinemas", like Latin-American, or Iranian cinema. An attempt at introducing Egyptian cinema in the world cinema sphere was tentatively made by Malkmus and Armes in their study *Arab and African Filmmaking* (1991). It offers a historical overview of the birth, development and consolidation of the different national film traditions in this vast and diverse geographical area. The vastness of the area covered in their study is also their weakness, since it is impossible to present a deep reading and understanding of any national cinema industry when including so many countries. Nevertheless their work includes an overview of the development of Egyptian cinema and its link with a local emerging nationalism against the colonial rulers. In the literature review, I have already hinted at the importance of Egyptian cinema in the creation of a national, Egyptian identity, referring to the many studies that have taken nationalism and modernism as defining features covering the lifespan of Egyptian cinema.

An emerging national film culture was evidenced through adaptations from novels, like the 1930 film *Zaynab* by director Muhammad Karim, which, according to Egyptian film historian and critic, Samir Farid, was considered to be the most important Egyptian film of the era, as opposed to the first[1] feature-length films from 1927, *Layla* (Widad 'Urfi, Stéphane Rosti), and *Qubla Fi al-Sahra'/Kiss in the Desert* (Ibrahim Lama). From a nationalist perspective reconstructing the history of Egyptian cinema, *Zaynab* could be considered the country's most important silent film, directed by a native Egyptian and adapted from a modern Egyptian novel, Malkmus and Armes argue (1991: 28-9). Apart from the historical developments in the different cinema traditions, they do not venture beyond a merely structural analysis of the different genres and styles in Arab and African cinema, without linking these styles to specific historical, social, economic, cultural and political developments as meaning producing elements in the respective countries.

Within the disciplines of film and media studies, Malek Khouri's research on representations of the nation and pan-Arabism in Youssef Chahine's films, *The Arab National Project in Youssef Chahine's Cinema*

1 See chapter 1, footnote 3.

(2010), is important in the sense that he puts Chahine's work on the world cinema map from the perspective of Arab nationalism in his films. Khouri approaches Chahine's films and the topics therein from a postcolonial angle, including the production context within which the director worked as an artist, as well as the political and social changes the country was undergoing throughout his career. These sociopolitical transformations are all relevant and were treated by Chahine in his films, making an inclusive historical, materialist approach extremely relevant. Yet, with the exception of Chahine's films, Egyptian cinema remains practically invisible on the world cinema map.

The amalgam of approaches, which will also be applied in this study, strives to offer a different view on Egyptian films by critiquing social and political forces and changes in one society from the region (Egypt) and the different institutions that are at work shaping the country's self-image and society through popular culture.[2] Likewise, the articles in Joseph Gugler's anthology *Film In The Middle East and North Africa: Creative Dissidence* (2011) cover a variety of topics, films and film genres with one common thread: the subversive message they carry. The articles include historical (Eric Egan; Lisa Wedeen; Lina Khatib), postcolonial (Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi), structural (Roy Armes; Kevin Dwyer), and historical-anthropological (Walter Armbrust; Florence Martin) approaches as well as in-depth readings of exemplary films for each topic (political film, war film, *auteur* cinema). Interestingly though, the articles can be categorized along the different topics that Malek Khouri (2005) had extracted concerning *New Arab Cinema*, being religious dogmatism, independence and nationalism, renewed discussions on gender and sexuality and a modernist self-reflexive cinema. These topics betray the ongoing discussions on nation-building in a postcolonial Egypt, portrayed in a culture-specific cinema industry that is making sense of the world in its own way.

2 Stuart Hall (1981: 228) points out the "double movement of containment and resistance" in popular culture, allowing for an entirely different reading, other than the dominant and most obvious one. This gives popular culture an intrinsically political meaning and agency.

Yet, it remains conspicuously invisible on the world cinema map. Walter Armbrust (2000) states that "for over most of its history the Egyptian film industry has been systematically ignored in our literature on the Middle East" (Armbrust 2000: 300). Omar Kholeif (2011), too, notes the continued absence of Egyptian cinema in studies on (and international festivals about) world cinema, attributing the lack of presence of Egyptian cinema in (mainly) Western film theory to the fact that film theory is Eurocentric, and so is world cinema theory. In order to enter the Eurocentric academic discourse on world cinema, a film in a certain way has to *adapt* to foreign tastes and audiences, or as Kholeif writes: "it must diverge from its own tradition in order to find audiences abroad" (id. 4). Kholeif also mentions another reason, namely the cinema's commercial nature (as opposed to 'high art'; Kholeif 2011: 1-2) as one of the reasons for its limited presence.

Academic discussions on world cinema seem to favor alternative art-house films instead of 'sheer entertainment'. Yet, Egyptian cinema is not simply entertainment. It rather functions within a meaning-producing system for which a good understanding of the history of the cinema industry and its local production contexts are indispensable to fully comprehend the different levels of the films. Viola Shafik claims that, compared to other countries with public film production in a postcolonial era, Egyptian films produced by the public sector "followed the same commercial guidelines as the private sector" (Shafik 1998: 26). Thus both privately produced films, their main goal being to make money, and public sector films shared common elements (use of stars, tested storylines, familiar topics), elements that were not deemed fit for academic discussions on the 'meaning' of world cinema, but which were and are essential to create a shared language (Armbrust 1995: 83) between director, film and audience.

The discussions on how to theorize and define world cinema is still ongoing, although the more recent turn in world cinema theory and film theory in general is more practical and not an all-encompassing "Grand Theory" (Bordwell and Carroll 1996) which would ironically exclude certain films and film industries from the world cinema arena. Anthony Guneratne (2003) lists several reasons why third cinema[3]

3 When talking about 'third cinema', I am not referring to Third Cinema, the

theory was problematic and failed to enter theoretical discourse. Of importance here is his claim that film theory is Eurocentric – and more specifically used to be "Anglo-Francophone" (id. 10) – which led to the initial theoretical disinterest for world (read: non-European) cinemas. When film theory expanded its views beyond the major countries of production, it started out with ideas of 'difference'. World cinema theory, as it was defined, had to be different from the commercial Hollywood-style productions ('first cinema'), and different from European art-house cinema ('second cinema'). High expectations were in place for world/third cinema films, such as the expectation that socialist-inspired and state-supported productions are politically critical films. This in part also explains why some have compared commercial Egyptian cinema to Hollywood and have continued to ignore Egyptian cinema in discussions on world- and postcolonial cinema: rather than oppose dominant filmmaking practices, Egyptian cinema seemed to joyfully incorporate them.

The systematic exclusion of Egyptian cinema from the world cinema sphere goes far, to the point that Roy Armes (2005) does not even consider Egyptian films in his study on postcolonial North African cinema. Although Armes quotes Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1994) and how Said critiqued upon the links between cultural products and imperialist politics in 19th century Europe, and specifically how European cultural production actively contributed to justifications of imperialism, Armes himself – perhaps unwillingly – falls into the same trap of orientalist thinking. Armes's 2005 *Postcolonial Images: Studies in North African Film* does not include any chapter on the only truly successful national cinema industry present in North Africa, Egyptian cinema. This way, his inclusion of certain cinema cultures (and only specific 'festival-films', that is) – excluding certain others – is already informed by his own expectations about what constitutes North African cinema.

Perhaps with North African film he meant *Maghreb* films (which does become clear later in the book), but then his title should state so.

Latin-American movement from the 1960s and 70s. I mean with this term the 'third' element of world cinema, past the so-called first and second cinemas of Hollywood and art-house European films respectively.

True, Egypt falls in the middle between orientalist descriptions of both North Africa and 'the Middle East', so perhaps that is why he did not include it. But the reason is probably more formal and content-related. Not to discard 'North African' (or rather Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian) cinema(s) as unauthentic, Western scholars do have a fetishized obsession toward a few pioneer films from that region. They are undoubtedly interesting films worthy of studying, but let us have a look past the usual suspects of 'Arab cinema' and actually start to include films that are made in the first place for an 'indigenous' public[4] instead of European festivals.[5]

World cinema theory need not be so limiting and narrow. Lucía Nagib (2011) defines world cinema more inclusively, not simply as films 'different' or *other* from commercial Western cinema production or European 'art-house' films (thus the term 'third cinema'). For Nagib, the films' truthfulness to realism is the defining factor in theorizing about world cinema. In the introduction to *World Cinema and the Ethics of Realism*, she writes:

> I propose to break away from discourses of 'difference', which reduce world cinema to a victimized 'other' and risk replicating and perpetuating the very colonial partition of the world they claim to deconstruct. [...] I suggest the adoption of a positive, democratic and inclusive approach to film studies [...]. Once notions of a single center and primacies are discarded, everything can be put on the world cinema map on an equal footing, even Hollywood, which instead of a threat becomes a cinema among others. (Nagib, 2011: 1)

4 I am aware of the distinctions made here between 'Arab cinemas' versus 'other' world cinemas, and of the ethnocentric 'indigenous' label applied to Egyptian audiences. Therefore the labels are highlighted, to avoid being ethnocentric myself.

5 This, however, does not mean that those 'festival-films' cannot have a popular and positive reception in their country of origin, like the popular film *Omar Gatlato* (Allouache 1977). The same can be argued about some of Youssef Chahine's films that were incredibly popular both in Egypt as well as across its border, including festivals. He could be considered one of the exceptions who were able to attract both a foreign and local audience for (some of) his films.

Thus she discards the nationalist, transnationalist and diasporic traditions in theorizing about world cinema, suggesting they can lead to new divisions and *othering* non-Hollywood film production, which is continuously considered as 'different'.

Instead of defining world cinema in what it is not, she proposes to define it positively in terms of what it is, placing the world's diverse film traditions on equal footing. For this she uses the concept of "ethics of realism", or the films' truthful intentions in portraying 'reality' (Nagib 2011: 12). Cinematic 'reality' has since long been a point of discussion: with questions such as whether the camera's main purpose is a truthful and meticulous re-presentation of reality, or rather a means to distort said reality. For Nagib, this is not necessarily an opposition, as she understands reality in multiple ways. The examples of films she gives in her study come from a variety of countries in their different ways of portraying the 'real' (the physical reality through the body and sex; the reality of the medium as an eye on the world; and the real story in the form of biographies and documentaries). In this way, film as a medium to convey meaning and one's own vision on the world, can be appropriated and adapted by local filmmakers. Rather than define theories of World Cinema negatively, this positive definition allows for the inclusion of all forms, genres and modes of filmmaking into a discourse on world cinema theory.

Robert Stam (2003) in a similar line of thinking does not consider third/world cinema as something belonging to a different world or different cultures (different from what, one might ask, which would mean there is a presumed original or norm it differs from, i.e. Western cinemas). Instead, he argues for a definition of third cinema in terms of its incorporation and adaptation to local sensitivities and culture of common themes and techniques found in a – for a Western researcher at least – more familiar film culture. He understands 'hybridity' as one of the elements defining third cinema, as well as cinema in general (id. 37-8). For Stam, cinema is an example of a field where hybridity is most visible: it shares different times and spaces, and is able to switch between them as it likes, its hybridity is evidence of the relations between these spaces and times. But the cinema can also portray

"temporalized cultural contradictions" (id. 38), such as the interplay of local and global, the Western versus the non-Western, the traditional and the modern. In the literature overview, I have discussed Walter Armbrust's (1995) analysis of the hybrid configuration of Egyptian cinema and its 'codes of modernity', mixing both Western scientific advances and the appraisal of an Arabic and Islamic past. As such, Egyptian cinema – both art-house and commercial cinema – is a beautiful example of such a hybrid claims-making.

Homi Bhabha is known for coining the term hybridization as a temporary in-between-period of colonial occupation and the agency of local resistance through adaptation and mixing (Bhabha 1992: 148). Stam does not simply adapt the term to film studies in order to describe how aesthetic aspects are taken over from other cultures and adapted to local tastes. In his understanding, hybridization in film is active, and it means that local cultural elements are mixed with styles, narratives and techniques from other cultures and production contexts creating a new tradition but with an inherently political meaning. Bhabha's understanding of the term is in the first place political. He emphasizes that the oppressed could use this mixing of styles (as well as race and sexuality in his original definition) and adaptation of the colonizer's culture in order to fight back against oppression. Bhabha states that "[T]his is the historical movement of hybridity as camouflage, as a contesting, antagonistic agency functioning in the time-lag of sign/symbol, which is a space in-between the rules of engagement" (Bhabha 1994: 277). In this sense, hybridity in cinema also has a political agenda, against colonization and imperialism, as a means to oppose the hegemony of the oppressor and create a strong identity for the nation (see also chapter 2 on effendi masculinity, Ryzova 2005 and Jacob 2011; and Kholoussy 2010a about the health of the nation). Both the concepts of ethics of realism and hybridity are appealing, and offer the opportunity to watch Egyptian cinema from a different, less judging and more positive angle. The common criticism of commercialism becomes secondary to the Egyptian film industry's possibility for agency and political awareness in representing the nation, putting it on the world cinema map.

Walter Armbrust (2009) has undertaken an analysis of such a hybrid period in cultural production during enormous social and political changes in Egypt's recent history, namely the interwar period, referred to as the 'liberal period' after Egypt's formal independence from 1923 until the 40s. In line with other research,[6] he argues that this period was "formative to the Nasser era" (id. 156), thanks to three processes. These processes are "social change, the new nation-state political (and ideological) framework, and new forms of cultural production" (id. 157). Armbrust uses these processes in order to explain the complex developments going on in Egypt during a period that has often been labeled as 'the liberal experiment'. Particularly the emergence of a new, hybrid, class – the effendi – was informative of the different processes shaping Egyptian national identity in that period. Hybridity's agency is recognized in the effendi, which Armbrust describes as a performance (id. 168). Their performance was also situational, tapping into their Western-style education or their traditional, Egyptian backgrounds whenever necessary.

In addition, the developments of new media (press, cinema, photography, etc.), new political structures and ideologies (like Marxism, socialism, liberalism, raditionalism, etc.), new social classes ('effendiyya', plural of 'effendi'; but also bourgeois and mixed marriages between Europeans, Turks, Egyptians, Armenians, etc.) in a very diverse and multi-ethnic and multicultural society of early twentieth century Egypt were all involved in creating awareness for an emerging and independent Egyptian national identity. In an earlier essay, Armbrust has touched upon this line of thinking with regard to cinema in 'the golden age before the Golden Age', namely films from the vibrant 1940s and 50s (Armbrust 2000). He shows that films from the 1940s and 50s were not simply formative for the coming years, but were also distinctly popular because of their commercial nature and their cultural embedding in Egypt at the time. Egyptian cinema thus played an important symbolic role in the context of nation-building (Shafik 2007: 20) both running up to and after independence in 1952.

In sum, it is no longer necessary nor desirable to define Egypt's own film traditions in qualitative and essentialist terms, whether they

6 See Goldschmidt, Johnson and Salmoni (eds.), *Re-envisioning Egypt: 1919-1952*.

belong to an arbitrary aesthetics of world cinema, but rather to merit them for what they are worth: a popular cinema tradition anchored in Arab and Egyptian culture creating a sense of unity among different Arab countries through films, stars, and songs that millions of Arab viewers know and can identify with. As such, Egyptian melodrama as the most popular mode of filmmaking can be part of a discussion on cinematic 'realism', with its references to the lives of ordinary people and their emotional reactions to events unfolding in the film.

Christine Gledhill notes that realism and melodrama, although applying different aesthetics of the 'real', share the same cultural and ideological conditions (Gledhill 2005: 217). Egyptian melodrama, too, is not so different from realism. One example of its relation to literary realism is the many adaptations of the novels by Nagib Mahfuz, not to mention the scenarios he wrote or assisted in writing for many films from the 50s onward. But other elements abound, including melodrama's heightened interest in what lies beyond 'the real', or, in the words of Peter Brooks, its refusal "to content itself with the repressions, the tonings-down, the half-articulations, the accommodations, and the disappointments of the real" (Brooks 1995: ix). Melodrama thus instills additional meaning to the everyday, the principal theme of these films.

But I understand melodrama in this research as more than 'excess'. I adopt Linda Williams' argument that melodrama is a *mode* and not a *genre*. In her essay *Melancholy Melodrama* (2004), Williams clearly considers it as a modern mode of filmmaking: "[It] describes a perpetually modernizing form that is neither opposed to the norms of the "classical" nor to the norms of "realism" but which adapts both" (id. 273). In the case of Egyptian cinema, particularly after the implementation of the public sector filmmaking (1963-1971), both elements of classicism and the real are adopted and appropriated. Armbrust (1995) and Khouri (2005) have both shown the influence of modernity and the reappraisal of classical Arab culture (in literature, language and religion) on the codes of production of Egyptian cinema. The film industry's interest in the 'real', in terms of discourses on gender, class and the nation, furthermore elevates the Egyptian 'everyday' to complex notions of what constitutes an Egyptian

identity. In the methodology chapter (see chapter 4) I will discuss the importance of stardom in the construction of this notion of identity, based on Richard Dyer's (1998) informative study of stars.

3.2 Women's studies and queer theory as conceptual frameworks for the study of masculinities

It is common knowledge that gender is constructed and thus prone to changes in a given time and space. Culture – understood as a system to make meaning of the world around us (Hall 1997) – plays a role in constructing and maintaining, but also subverting gender norms. Thanks to women's studies, queer theory and men's studies, we know now that images of men and women (but also images of race and class) contribute to the naturalization of culturally contingent understandings of gender and identity, and thus also as constructed and changeable images. Richard Dyer notes that "masculinity, whiteness, heterosexuality and able-bodiedness are just images of identity alongside all others"; but he warns that considering and deconstructing these normative images as such does not mean that we have already reached the point of actually 'dethroning' hegemonic elements of identity (Dyer 2002b: 4). These images and identity constructing elements can still be constructed as ideals and understood as such by the audiences.

In this part of the chapter we will have a look at how feminist and queer theories have been of use as well for masculinity studies and this research. Masculinity is not a single entity, but as a term it stands in contrast to that which is not deemed masculine. Gender identity, the overarching term for masculinities and femininities, in this study is understood the way Judith Butler described it: not only is it a performance (Goffman 1956; West and Zimmerman 1987), it is also a performance of a non-existent and presumed 'original', exemplified in her analysis of drag as gender parody (Butler 1990: 338). Butler's theory is rather complex, in part a development from Erving Goffman's earlier theorizing on the presentation of the self (1956), although Butler is inspired by psychoanalytic and feminist theories in

Gender Trouble. Goffman's study posited a very important premise inspired by semiotics, namely that an individual's identity is a continuous 'performance', depending on the surroundings. This premise offers possibilities to question also the 'performance' of gender identities. Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that "one is not born a woman, one *becomes* one" (from *The Second Sex*) means that gender is a social construct and that it is part of one's identity, yet disarticulated from the biological sex. Butler does not refer to Goffman in *Gender Trouble* (1990), but there are similarities between her premise of gender performativity and Goffman's principle of performance as they understand gender identity as a 'doing', rather than a 'being'.

The difference between her and Goffman's work is situated in Butler's focus on relations of power in gender performance. Performativity does not so much refer to an *actual* performance of gender (West and Zimmerman 1987), but rather to the discursive practices, the utterances (or when saying something becomes doing something), that inform it and the power relations that arise from it. One of the criticisms of her theory is that 'performativity' seems to neglect interaction with others, something which was essential in Goffman's theory of performance. Another important premise that Butler refuses, is the idea of an original which was present in Goffman's performance theory. Gender performance means a doing, but on a conceptual map of available identities and elements of identity, as if it is an imitation of some kind of 'original' gender performance. For Butler, gender performativity refutes the very premise of an original; it is a "performance without an original" (Butler 1990: 136). According to Brickell (2003), applying both theoretic strands together offers more possibilities to study larger structures of masculine performances, as presented in media. But it also answers questions related to the establishment of norms and the successful (or not) performance of gender, continuously recreating a gender binary and its precondition of an illusion of heteronormativity.

Butler's emphasis on the performativity of gender, namely the 'utterances' of gender, reminds also of Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity is not so much a set of characteristics embodied by a certain individual, as it

constitutes the whole of power relations that fluctuate through society and whose discourse imposes itself as hegemonic, while subordinating others. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity has been a huge influence on the studies of masculinities, since it offers a workable tool to recognize the co-existence of multiple masculinities and to analyze how power relations *among* men are constructed complementary to the more obvious male-female binary. Connell uses the term 'hegemonic' to explicitly point attention to the fluctuating power relations and hegemony's reliance on consent, rather than absolute power, which offers the possibility to study hegemonic masculinity's internal inconsistencies as well as the possibility for change.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has since been criticized and undergone more workable changes, as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) recognize that the original conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity was too universalizing and simplistic. Demetriou (2001) has remarked that Connell's initial theory of hegemonic masculinity, although arguing for scrutinizing the relations of power in a gender hierarchy, does not go far enough in analyzing how hegemonic masculinity (and its heteronormative patriarchal order) came to power and continues to remain so. He summarizes it clearly, saying that

> [w]e are used to seeing masculine power as a closed, coherent, and unified totality that embraces no otherness, no contradiction. That is an illusion that must be done away with because it is precisely through its hybrid and apparently contradictory content that hegemonic masculinity reproduces itself (id. 355).

Demetriou raises valid arguments to emphasize the *power* relations between and within genders, instead of focusing on the domination of one group over another. He posits that Gramsci's concept of hegemony as a 'historic bloc' should be more thoroughly explored:

> whereas for Connell the existence of non-white or non-heterosexual elements in hegemonic masculinity is a sign of contradiction and weakness, for me it is precisely its internally diversified and hybrid nature that makes the hegemonic bloc dynamic and flexible (id. 348).

It is through hegemonic masculinity's ability to adapt and incorporate supposedly subversive elements of masculinity that its hegemony is reestablished. In a later article, in order to clarify the theoretical concept of hegemonic masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) acknowledge this criticism and opt to keep several of its features, while rejecting and reformulating others.

As such, the concept of hegemonic masculinity still retains its features of historicity and plurality of masculinities. The understanding of gender hierarchy as a "pattern of hegemony" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 846) is also reconfirmed, meaning that the dominant group is not in power through absolute force but rather through a negotiated agreement with other players in society. This dominant group is also not necessarily the most common type of masculinity in a given society. What they reject now, however, is the notion of hegemonic masculinity as an "assemblage of traits" (id. 847) as well as the concept's limited attention to the strategies of power. More important is how they reformulate certain elements of hegemonic masculinity into more usable tools for analysis. They concentrate on the concept's feature of power relations (id. 849), emphasizing the agency of women but, also of subordinated masculinities and emphasizing the importance of the links between local, regional and global masculinities.

It is one thing to recognize the multiplicity of masculinities and the different power relations among men and between genders, but how are these power relations constructed and maintained – or subverted – in everyday life? The power relations are partly constructed and informed by institutions which cannot be ignored in an analysis of masculinities and masculine identities. Kandiyoti argues that "an adequate explanation of the reproduction of patriarchal relations requires much closer attention to those *institutions* which are crucially responsible for the production of masculine identities" (Kandiyoti 1994: 198, emphasis mine), effecting also the bodies on which these institutions inscribe meaning. These institutions can be personal and social, such as kinship and family relations, including marriage and circumcision, as well as the local 'informal' organization within the confines of the neighborhood; they can be legal, such as the personal

status laws informed by an Islamic (or Christian) frame of reference; and they can be organizational structures such as the army, police and the state. In the field of mass media, the cinema industry is also an important institution creating gendered identities.

Mervat Hatem (1987) contends that in Middle Eastern gender studies since the end of the 70s the focus had shifted towards a Marxist approach questioning the political economy of patriarchal societies where institutions were held responsible for the continuing oppression of women (id. 811). This approach was designed to acknowledge more agency for women in the region who were previously often described as passive and not playing any significant role in the changing conditions of Middle Eastern societies (id. 812), but ironically ended up considering women as passive "objects of capital accumulation" (id. 813). Furthermore, a Marxist approach does not theorize the specific sexual and gender roles assigned to women (and men), but instead focuses solely on the market (id. 813). Hatem argues that "patriarchal systems have their own dynamics which, while affected by changing material conditions, are not totally determined by them" (id. 814). Thus she proposes a mixed approach, one that recognizes the material differences between men and women, but simultaneously focuses "on the autonomous dynamic of gender and its centrality to the development of patriarchal systems" (id. 814). The addition of the recognition of the dynamic that gender can produce is an essential part of the production of meaning. Not only the institutions as listed above produce gendered identities for men and women top-down, but these institutions are also the result of negotiations and power relations that influence in turn the social organization of gender relations bottom-up.

The most important argument in her article is the definition she gives for patriarchy, as opposed to other (Arab) feminists' definitions. Hatem criticizes Nawal el-Saadawi's definition of patriarchy for its ambiguity, without a historical cadre to be able to define its specifics in a certain space and time (id. 815). Likewise, she says that Fatima Mernissi's definition of the concept of patriarchy is a generalization across different Muslim countries and cultures, as if all Muslim countries would have the same sort of patriarchal system (id. 816).

Fatnah Sabbah analyzes the different discourses about women in two very different bodies of texts: erotic literature and Islamic legal texts. But Hatem argues that an analysis of different discourses – which she defines in Foucaultian terms – should consider a historical and social background of the texts studied (id. 817). In other words, she defines patriarchy in more practical, material and social terms, but looks at it "through a sexual lens" (id. 818). In the study of masculinities, a similar look at patriarchy can be useful to analyze how different masculinities are constructed and change in a given society and a given time.

David Gilmore (1990) has studied the manifestation of a hegemonic masculinity within a patriarchal system that presented itself in the Mediterranean, more specifically his analysis of a patriarchal understanding of hegemonic masculinity in a Spanish town. As he notes, the essence lies in the public performance of masculinity. A man needs to present himself in public, thus putting himself at risk and make sure his achievements are tangible and visible. Apart from the public performance, men were and are required to create offspring, provide for their families and protect them when facing danger. Generally, these elements of a 'good' (not in a moral, but in a quantitative sense) performance of masculinity are also discernable in Trujillo's (1991) analysis of American popular culture's display of hegemonic masculinity. Similar to Gilmore, the performance is measured according to the men's achievements, physical strength and courage. Further, the man's performances are measured in the first place by other men, as also Marcia Inhorn has contended (Inhorn 2003: 249). As an anthropologist, Gilmore describes the different manifestations as he saw them in front of him, while Trujillo uses cultural products to describe attitudes towards and common perceptions of masculinities in American pop culture. Similarly, we will see these features return in the analysis as elements of hegemonic masculinity, although with significant differences and approaches towards it depending on the age in which the film was made.

3.3 Systems of representation

Now that we have a better understanding of the signs and symbols in Egyptian cinema, as well as a clearer understanding of how gender works, it is time to have a look at how this translates itself on the screen. How does representation work, how does it produce meaning, and how are we to understand its politics of representation? Films, like any other medium, convey meaning within a system of representation. Meaning, then, has to "enter the domain of these practices [of representation], if it is to circulate effectively within a culture" (Hall 1997: 10). Stuart Hall distinguishes two systems of representation. The first system is the requirement for a shared conceptual map, a common cultural background (Hall 1997: 18). But this is not enough; the conceptual map needs to be conveyed by a common language, a system of signs. Hall's semiotic understanding of representation is more complex, however, focusing first and foremost on the relationship between producers and consumers of language (understood broadly as any system conveying meaning through signs) and the way meaning is conveyed through representation. Hall further broadens the understanding of representation, to include Foucault's historically grounded concept of discourse. Discourse and discursive practices provide a useful tool for understanding cultural products not as separate entities but as part of a larger discourse on a specific subject. Furthermore, Foucault's interest in the relation between power/knowledge in the production of meaning appealed to Hall because of its possibility for political action. A historical understanding of discourse is useful in deconstructing representations of masculinity, particularly the relations of power between hegemonic and other masculinities. Stuart Hall described Foucault's understanding of representation in his seminal study *The Work of Representation* (1997).

Foucault's system of representation consists of a set of rules and discursive practices in a given time and culture, producing knowledge and relations of power (Hall 1997: 42-43). The discourse on men and masculinities, and gender in general, constructs historically and culturally specific understandings of men and masculinities, as well as

women and femininities. Simultaneously, this discourse is produced through a language with which meaningful things can be said about men and masculinities, while being historically grounded in time and space. In order to study the language used in films, we need to consider several important elements in the analysis. First we need to consider statements about masculinity (id. 45). With regard to cinema, where can such statements be found? First and foremost within the film itself and the 'images of men' we see in the finished product. These images of men relate to the images we find all around us, in magazines, on television, billboards, newspapers, etc., which produce those statements. Within the film, images attain further meaning through the techniques and effects imposed on them. Statements are also quite literally made through the narrative and dialogues, for example the hero 'saving' his 'lady' (or not) and behavior expected from men (or not). But also masculine behavior performed by women can inform us about what masculinity means and who is allowed to impersonate it. In chapter 9 on female masculinities and women directors I give an overview of some iconic masculine performances by women in film.

What then is the subject that those statements talk about within a set of accepted rules and norms (Hall 1997: 45)? The topic under investigation in this research is masculinity, but who (or what) 'impersonates', or in Goffman's terms, performs masculinity within these discourses? When there are multiple masculinities related to each other through power structures and relationships of domination, subjugation and marginalization, the question remains who is impersonating and performing masculinity, how is this performance represented (a hero or an anti-hero, men or women, etc.) and how is tension created with whoever is not represented as masculine? Between these various bearers of masculinity, these different 'performative utterances',[7] one informs and is informed by their

7 The term 'performative utterances' was first coined by Austin to distinguish between words that convey actions (performative utterance) and words that simply describe (constative utterance). For Eve K. Sedgwick, the importance was not so much the difference between the two types of utterances, but rather the way 'performative utterances' were read and possibly distorted and subverted (Edwards 2008: 80-81). In the research at hand, the

specifics. In other words, one is not entirely free to choose whatever type of masculinity, characteristic or form one would want, "for ... the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence" (Butler 1990: 33). This choice is limited and happens within a socially constructed discourse of acceptable norms and behavior. Already these questions can inform us on representational politics leading to an informed discussion on gender politics in society.

However, if this discourse is socially constructed, then how does behavior become 'normal' and socially acceptable? In other words, how do these statements gain authority and a sense of truth, a sense of real (Hall 1997: 45)? For this, the Marxist concepts of ideology and Gramscian hegemony are useful, but in Foucault's reformulation. In the discussion on hegemonic masculinity before I outlined how hegemony works. Representations of these power struggles between and within genders are informed by and inform the specific cultural and historical contexts, the society in which these representations and the language used to convey them, come to mean something (id.: 28-29). Ideology – and specifically ideology of representations – is defined here as a perceived-as-truthful system of representation, similar to Cynthia Freeland's definition, "supposing that an ideology is a distorted representation of existing relations of power and domination" (Freeland 1996: 205). An 'ideology' of representations is thus a system that has the power and ability to give itself a sense of 'truth' and is accepted as such.

For Foucault, the Marxist definition of ideology (in economic terms) was not sufficient (Foucault 1980a, 1980b). According to him, it focused too much on material class differences and neglected complicated relations of power. Furthermore, its definition as an erroneous assumption of reality, assumes that ideology opposes an actual 'truth', thus paradoxically recreating the binary Marxist critique tries to uncover. Instead he proposed to not try to merely 'discover' and critique ideology and advance a valid alternative for it (another 'truth'), but instead to try to uncover "the application and

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performative utterances are understood as acts (Butler 1990) through which one 'performs' gender.

effectiveness of power/knowledge" (Hall 1997: 49). It is the relation between power and knowledge and their prevalent discursive practices in society that "not only assumes the authority of 'the truth' but has the power to make itself true" (id. 49), what Foucault called the "régime of truth" (Foucault 1980a: 131). Power, for Foucault, was not just 'present', but it is active: power fluctuates and comes into existence whenever it is used.

Since power is relational and can emanate in all structures of social life, this means that it is also at work within institutions and institutionalized practices such as cinema. Foucault gave examples from our knowledge of sex(uality), medicine or crime as the result of power relations, and how this knowledge in turn resulted in the affirmation of certain practices and relations of 'power'. Concerning masculinities within a patriarchal order, we should be asking questions on how certain practices within particular institutions contribute to a construction of masculine identities (see Kandiyoti 1994). These include, but are not confined to, marriage, the family, the state, the army (and the emphasized militarization of Egypt since Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir and the Free Officers' coup), colonialism and neo-imperialism and their effects on local identities (see also Said 1994, Ryzova 2005, Massad 2009, Jacob 2011), as well as an increasingly globalized world and its consequences on the local, national and regional levels. Representational practices in cultural products are informed by and inform the institutions that produce these images (mass media such as television, cinema, magazines, newspapers, and internet). If we assume that these institutions, based on historically defined structures of knowledge and power, are the result of a historical formation, then so are the practices that are prevalent within that historical context.

When these representational practices, now understood as both emanating within and forming a historical discourse, are shown to be a social and cultural construct, we can start looking for norms within that discourse and possible subversions of this normativity. We can deconstruct the films' language, which does not simply mean uncover and abolish said normativity, but to expose it as inherently constructed through its internal contradictions (i.e. the possibility of a

queer reading of those utterances). This foregrounds a possibility to adapt to new historical and social contexts, what Foucault called the 'discursive formation' (Foucault 1972: 74). It also means there is essentially a link between the text and real life, when the text can be read politically and its contradictions exposed. Not only gender, but also the film's language is thus considered as a social and historical construct. The politics of representations of gender within films will be deconstructed and questioned. Those representations are no longer considered stable or true, but rather are destabilized and open to change and adaptations. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argued that questioning gender relations – understood as "arenas of tension" (id. 853) – and studying hegemonic masculinities must always "acknowledge the possibility of democratizing gender relations" (id. 853). Representations of gender and gendered relations are political and contribute to an understanding of the social world, while the discursive practices historically available to us in turn offer meaningful ways of representing gender.

Thus the concept of representation, as defined by Hall and based on Foucault, is political in the sense that it is the link between culture (as a system within which we make sense of ourselves) and society. Both are historical and changing as part of wider local, regional and global developments. Both need each other as they only 'mean' something together, a meaning which is conveyed through the processes of representation in a particular society's cultural products. Representation is a means of expressing thoughts and ideas and communicating them with others, which are encoded and decoded (Hall 1980) and become meaningful. Representation for Hall is thus an interactive process. This is not to be confused with 'presentation', which is more tangible. It 'presents' something, like an exhibition showcasing artifacts. But what these artifacts mean, then, can only be understood when we understand the politics of representation behind those artifacts. The question is not necessarily what men and women represent, but how men and women, masculinities and femininities are represented and how this has come to be regarded as 'normal' masculine or feminine behavior.

But an extra element needs to be highlighted in this regard. It is one thing to deconstruct images of masculinity and femininity, but the production of meaning is not only reserved for those behind the actual production of films. The production of meaning is a continual process, as Stuart Hall has pointed out in his seminal article *Encoding/Decoding* (2001). Hall notes that the linear conception of the transfer of messages has proven to be unsatisfactory, instead arguing for a more complex procedure, what he called the 'circuit of culture' (Hall 1997:1). Different elements contribute to the production of meaning, not in the least by the producers of the artifact, but also the consumers of it. The consumption is also not a straightforward process, a criticism aimed at early feminist criticism of cultural products. Laura Mulvey's article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975), although pinpointing an important issue in the representation of women on the white screen, was criticized for not taking into account the diversity of the audience. Elements of identity differ for each person, who constructs her identity as different from those surrounding her.

Simultaneously, the understanding of the texts depends on what 'rules' are allowed in a certain time and space. The interpretation of the meanings of the texts depends on this regulation. All elements together (production, consumption, representation, identity and regulation) are part of the encoding and decoding processes that take place whenever a 'text' (understood in its broadest sense) is produced and consumed. In this research, I will not focus my analysis on audience responses to the films, but rather start from the films and their social and historical contexts to analyze the representations of images of Egyptian masculinities and men on the white screen. In the following chapter I will explain in more detail the methodology of this research, explaining the meaning of stars and paradigms of masculinities, how 'text' is understood and how these images were analyzed based on a contextual reading of the films.

4. Methodology

This research covers multiple decades, with films from the 50s until the first decade of the new millennium. The main research question is centered on the representational practices in Egyptian films, more precisely gendered representations of men and masculinities. As discussed in the theoretical part (see chapter 3), cultural studies and feminist theories offer the necessary tools for analyzing the chosen films, adapted to the specific research questions of masculinity and postcolonial identities in Egypt after 1952, the starting date of this research project. In this chapter I will outline the methodology and different approaches that are adopted when analyzing the popular representations of gender and masculinities as well as the reasons behind the choice of films and the different performances of masculine types. 'Reading' a film text through textual analysis can inform us about the individual meanings conveyed in each film, but these analyses have to be opened up to social critique and placed in a historical context.

Media are not merely conveying meaning top-down, yet, that is often how media studies are set up regarding the Arab world, something Armbrust referred to as the '*Al Jazeera* effect' (Armbrust 2012: 48).[8] Nevertheless, many researchers have pointed out the effects of media on society, also with respect to Arab societies (Armbrust 1996, 2000; Abu-Lughod 2005; Kraidy 2010), and the need to study how media and representations work (Kimmel, in Craig (ed.) 1992; Hall 1997; MacKinnon 2003).[9] Stuart Hall (2001) also contends that not every text

8 The term was first coined in 2000 by Simon Henderson and later reused to explain the effects of private satellite TV-stations in the Arab world. But, as Armbrust correctly notes, the approaches to analyzing the effects of such TV-stations on Arab audiences are always top-down, assuming a stable one-way relationship of producer and consumer of the media. The changes that these stations and 'new media' can bring about are in his opinion not always so sudden and novel, but rather they are also and already the effect of developments and changes underway in Arab countries.

9 With regard to gender representations in mass media, Annette Kuhn's study *The Power of the Image* (1985) questions images of women in mass media and how they construct ideals. Steve Neal looks at images of men, in his seminal

can be read in the same way. Rather, meanings are 'encoded and decoded' by individuals, and meanings can change substantially during this process. As MacKinnon (2003: 24) notes, this might answer questions such as why "mass culture [...] can be so appealing to [...] members of [politically and socially marginalized groups]", which are otherwise oppressed or marginalized by those same forces dominating mass culture. It signals at the possibility of individual members of the audience to 'read' different meanings in the film and enjoy it depending on their own understanding.

In the following parts of the chapter the method applied to analyze and 'read' film texts will be explained. I will start with Richard Dyer's analysis of the phenomenon of 'stars' (Dyer 1998) to elucidate the reasons for the choice of actors (and actresses; e.g. in the chapter on female masculinities). In addition to Dyer, Andrew Spicer's concept of 'paradigmatic films' has proven to be useful for defining the choice of films from the otherwise vast database of Egyptian cinema (Spicer 2001). Furthermore, the films cannot be analyzed without more attention being paid to the genre and genre conventions that might delineate readings of the films and their gender representations (Gledhill 2012). Then I will go on to define the four major periods in Egyptian cinema production that I have singled out for the analysis of the different masculine types together with an explanation of why certain specific types were chosen. And finally I will explain how the individual films were analyzed through textual analysis, for which David Bordwell's formalist approach (1985) as well as Gérard Genette's (1988) attention to narration and narrative have proven to be indispensable.

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articles *Chariots of Fire* (1982) and *Masculinity as Spectacle* (1983), informed in part by Laura Mulvey's critique on the images of women in her article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975). Although these articles have encountered a lot of criticism for its one-sided view, the main point is that they have established a critique on representations of gender and questioned the way representations work.

4.1 Star studies

Richard Dyer's analysis of stars has been a major contribution to cultural studies. Stars were initially studied as commercial products of the culture industry, and Dyer has clarified the notion that stars are constructs of and produce meaning in society and, therefore, can fulfill roles much larger than 'simply' entertain. Dyer states in *Heavenly Bodies* that "stars matter because they act out aspects of life that matter to us; and performers get to be stars when what they act out matters to enough people" (Dyer 1986: 17). He distinguishes between the actual person 'playing' the star and the star image, which can be reproduced in a number of media, like films, magazines, photographs, articles. The star has become a *text* which produces meaning over a number of media (Gledhill 2005: xii). As such, the subject (both the represented subject, the actor, and the spectator 'reading' the text) needed its own place alongside the more 'traditional' approaches to analyzing film texts, meaning, the narrative and mise-en-scène and the star's relation to both.

For Dyer, the star is more than just a performer in a film; a star is a complex construct with actual grounding in society and with images represented in cultural products. Because of the star's capacity for authenticity and sincerity, the image becomes her or his actual identity. Similar to gender performance, the star's performance has the ability – which is simultaneously a requirement for stardom – to make it look 'real'. A star is able to convince the audience of the make-believe, thanks to what Dyer calls 'charisma' (Dyer 1998: 30-2). Dyer adopts the term from Weber, who defined charisma within a discussion on political order as a leadership quality that differentiates the leader form ordinary people (id. 30). It makes the charismatic leader's appeal extraordinary. Additionally, the leader's charisma is most effective during uncertain and ambiguous times. Stars, different from political leaders in that they are not supposed to have institutionalized political power, should be understood as charismatic figures that can create some kind of logic and order in the "instabilities, ambiguities and contradictions in the culture" (id. 31). Dyer further notes that a star's charisma is intricately connected to

"the specificities of the ideological configurations to which it belongs" (id. 31), as well as to the audience's fragmented nature. Thus a star image can be read in multiple ways, and specific audiences can appropriate particular stars, most notably marginalized and subordinated groups in the audience, which Dyer describes as young, female or not heterosexual. In Egypt, this is probably somewhat different and most likely related to class differences in the first place. Lila Abu-Lughod's fieldwork in a village in the rural south shows how audiences are reluctant to accept the messages that stars convey through the television serials because of the social differences between audience and stars (Abu-Lughod 2005: 228). The stars' ability to represent the ordinary lives of the audience fails, resulting in poignant questions about the whole process of representation and the production and consumption of meaning.

Dyer calls for us to study how stars (as texts) function in society and how they relate to ideology through their diverse representations. There are essentially three main questions to address when studying stars: why, what and how do they signify (Dyer 1998: 2). He relates these questions to ideology as "the set of ideas and representations in which people make sense of the world and the society in which they live" (id. 2). He understands ideology in the same terms as Gramsci and acknowledges its internal contradictions, as well as external subversions and opposition to it; there is never *one* ideology but multiple ideologies, one of which is dominant. Star images are then the result as well as tools of the fluctuating relations of power, and they should not be defined in a number of characteristics, but rather as essential contributors to the reproduction of dominant ideology.

But stars can also positively and negatively reaffirm the hegemony of a dominant ideology (id. 3). Chris Holmlund (2002: 224-5) shows that a queer reading of certain hyper-masculine performances might add meaning to dominant readings of these performances and expose them as a masquerade. But, she argues, most viewers will not see these masculine performances as a masquerade, but rather as something 'real'. Gaylyn Studlar (2001: 175) adds to this that "[t]he male body in a performative mode draws attention to the construction of masculinity as a masquerade that attempts to create a set of readable signs

signifying "manliness" and to display these signs as a coherent subjectivity". The masquerade is thus recognized, but it can be used to create the illusion of a stable identity and the masquerade of masculine performances is thus not necessarily exposed as inherently constructed with its own contradictions and incongruities.

Yet, studying star performances for the analysis of masculinities is useful "to think about the performative aspects of masculinity in the cinema" (Tasker 2002: 233). Whether or not the performance is exposed as a masquerade that is either understood as a construction or as a stable identity, the star in and of itself is "composed of so many layers [and] so many slippages" (id. 233) that it raises questions about the supposed stability of gender identities. Richard Dyer continues, stating that the star's image might effectively conceal "prevalent contradictions or problems" within an ideology, or offer compensation for the values which the audience lacks or which are perceived as under threat (Dyer 1998: 27-8). The star is thus an essential element in the production and consumption of meaning, in order to promote a certain dominant ideology and make it look not only plausible but also as the best option around.

4.2 Cultural types and paradigm films

The corpus of films is vast in a film history and -culture like Egypt's and rigorous decisions need to be made, based on justifiable criteria, for which Dyer's typology of stars is helpful. The films were chosen based on what Andrew Spicer (2001) called paradigmatic films in his enticing study *Typical Men: Representations of Masculinity in Popular British Culture*. Spicer defined paradigm films as "the ones that establish, reinforce, or significantly modify, an important male type" (id. 3). Not only for the choice of films and different types, but also the division in four major time frames in the period following the 1952 coup, needs justification. I have opted to distinguish these four main periods based on both technical and political developments in the film industry and the country respectively, but also based on film critics' and scholars' historical overviews of changing discourses and styles within film productions. In the following paragraphs, I will first

outline how the term 'type' is understood and how paradigms of male types have proven to be a useful starting point to distinguish the different types and films.

In order to understand paradigmatic masculinities, Spicer first argues that it is indispensable to differentiate between types and stereotypes and to do so he uses himself the term cultural types (id. 1). A type refers to an immediately recognizable character within a story, while a stereotype serves to stigmatize a group (Dyer 1993: 13). A type is recognizable in the media, but differs from stereotypes in that it does not create a binary between 'us' and 'them'. But as Dyer (1999: 247) states, the use of stereotypes is "part of the way societies make sense of themselves", and thus they also fulfil a necessary task in media representations. It creates a certain group feeling, a unity for those not associated with the stereotype, whether a racial, religious, class or gender stereotype.

Dyer furthermore distinguishes between a social type and the more generic and 'universal' archetype. Yet, the distinction between both is not always clear, since Dyer himself realizes that what is passed off as a 'universal' archetype, is in itself a construction of a value system that imposes itself as universal and ahistorical. In order to avoid an undefinable 'blurb' of characteristics and elements, Spicer prefers to use the term 'cultural type' which is recognizable and functions as an umbrella term for Dyer's more confusing distinction between social types and archetypes. Furthermore, the cultural type is open for change and can adapt to a particular context (similar to Dyer's social type), as opposed to the more rigid stereotype which is posited as fixed, and against the generic archetype. The 'cultural type' allows for more diversity within the type, across time and across space, while still pertaining to and aiming for an (ideal) type.

In one point I disagree with Spicer, at least when it comes to the historically specific context of Egyptian cinema as opposed to British cinema. He argues that stars as types had little or no influence on an institutional level while the production companies decided on how to represent, for example, men in films from the post-war era (1945-60; Spicer 2001: 2). In Egypt, I contend, films were and are often written with a specific star in mind, who has great influence on how the story

will develop or what the final film will look like. Perhaps this is more in line with the commercial production of stars similar to Hollywood that Dyer has studied and as such gives validity to his claim that films can be considered 'vehicles' – especially in an Egyptian context – for the star's image to be shown and (possibly) idealized (Dyer 1998: 62). Without claiming that a star's vehicles could be considered a genre – a critique aimed at Dyer's theory by Andrew Britton (2005) – the films nevertheless create certain expectations regarding narrative simply because of a certain star's presence in particular films.

Such a development is visible in films from the 1940s, for example, with singer-songwriter Farid al-Atrash who often played the role of the poor talented artist in love with a girl whom he in the end is likely to marry. These musical comedies were written in the first place to let him sing and showcase his new romantic songs to his loved one and the audience in the setting of a comedic love story based on misunderstandings and double-entendres. Also, more recently, the famous star Muhammad Sa'd continues to represent the same male types – the poor unemployed working class man without education and with speaking disorders because of drug and alcohol abuse. He has the final word on the film's plotline which often results in the joining together of sketches without a real plot structure, to showcase his character's ambiguity and make the audience laugh with recognizable and typically Egyptian particularities. The haphazard narrative of his films results, however, in uncertainty because simply anything is possible. But, he has created certain 'conventions' in his films, such as video-clip scenes, coming out of nowhere, in which he sings and dances. His films consist of a chaotic narrative integrated by his star performance, refuting any sort of genre conventions yet simultaneously tapping into the rich history and imagery of Egypt's cinema industry and popular culture.

4.3 Four major periods in Egypt's history and film industry

In order to be able to define the different cultural types present in the films, I return back to Spicer's concept of paradigmatic films. I have chosen to chronologically organize the different chapters according to

recognizable masculine types for each period. As these types are all historically, culturally and socially contingent, it is possible to discern specific 'paradigm' masculinities in certain films of each period. A downside to this is that not every film is necessarily 'popular' in terms of its commercial success. Yet, all the films do boast several popular actors and actresses of their time, recognizable stars who conveyed meaning to their respective audiences. Likewise, although the time frames are not always as clear-cut as outlined below, we can distinguish broad strokes in the developments and changing forms of representation thanks to these somewhat iconic, paradigmatic films. I would also like to point out that, although certain paradigms of masculinity appear to be more prominent in specific periods, this does not mean that they are limited to only that period in time. These cultural types, thanks to the acknowledgement of a fluid depiction, can return in other periods in different, yet recognizable, forms.

4.3.1 'Revolutionary melodrama'

The first period I distinguish in this research is relatively easy to justify, namely the period following the 1952 coup d'état and the subsequent period of public sector film making in Egypt. Still, the simple fact that there was a regime change does not necessarily result in a change in film production. The commercial productions of Egyptian cinema, like musicals and comedies, remained its predominant mode of filmmaking while only a handful of realist or somewhat anti-authoritarian productions were made alongside the commercial ones.

Nevertheless, the 1950s and 60s offered opportunities for new and young directors, but also for new actors, styles and genres. The new styles that became 'popular' – also thanks to a relaxing censorship law – are melodramatic-realist films, with influences from Italian neo-realism, Soviet montage and German expressionism. The Egyptian director Salah Abu Sayf, who studied cinema in Italy clearly affecting his film style, is often considered a proponent of a realist style in Egyptian cinema – though with melodramatic elements as well. Joel Gordon (2002) calls the new style of films from this period *revolutionary melodrama*. These films were made in a period when the state

"embarked upon the construction of a new civic identity for an independent Egypt" (id. 8). Emboldened by the regime change, directors started to explore issues of social inequality, gender relations, tradition and modernity, and all this with the image of a new Egypt in mind.[10]

Although many of the films Gordon treats in his analysis are not revolutionary in terms of form and style, they do showcase a "youthful spirit that may be called revolutionary" (id. 11). As I will show in my analysis as well, the chosen films showcase an ambivalence towards and subversion of tradition and patriarchy. As such, it is possible to discern major changes in terms of gender representations and discourses on gender in the country. Laura Bier argues that there was an active politics of gender (Bier 2011: 4) in 'Abd al-Nasir's general political ideology that was to build the new nation-state. I would like to claim – and I will return to this in the next chapter – that this politics of gender was also visible in films made in this period. Many mainstream directors – particularly Henry Barakat and Salah Abu Sayf – directed several films that contributed to this new discourse on gender in the post-colonial state.[11] A famous example of a nationalist feminist film emphasizing the role of women in a new Egypt is the film *al-Bab al-Maftuh/The Open Door* (Henry Barakat 1963), based on the novel with the same title by Latifa al-Zayat. But not only new representations of women were visible; regarding men we can also clearly define new roles and forms of representation. We can discern in this period certain new types of men – as opposed to the poor romantic singers and bourgeois masculinity of the 1940s.

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10 In the sense of constructing an image of the modern nation, the post-revolutionary films do not differ much from the pre-revolutionary ones. Ifdal Elsaket (n.d.) has shown how films from the 30s and 40s already proclaimed an image of modernity and progress. Walter Armbrust has made similar claims in his essay on the 'Golden Age before the Golden Age', the commercial film productions – mostly musicals and comedies – from the 1940s. In it, Armbrust shows how these films expressed images of a tolerant cosmopolitan and multi-religious Egypt.

11 I am not only talking about films that only passingly mention women issues as part of wider social issues, but also explicitly feminist films emphasizing the role of women in a new Egypt and in building the nation.

Two paradigms of male types will be discussed in this era. On the one hand there are the national heroes, symbolizing the strong, independent Arab male. These men are the pride of the nation, defending it against foreign invaders or local traitors. At the other end of the spectrum are the corrupt, backward and traditionalist *ma'allimīn*. The name literally means 'masters' or 'knowledge-bearers' but refers to their higher economic status within the confines of the popular local neighborhood as self-employed shop owners. The *ma'allim* is often portrayed as an uneducated brute, knowing nothing else but a recourse to physical violence and oppression. Both types betray the films' adherence to a hegemonic male ideal, inscribed with middle class bourgeois values of progress, education, moderation and a presumed equality for women. The national heroes positively portray these ideals, heroicized through their masculine performances on the screen. The *ma'allim* contravenes that presumed ideal, his masculine performance depicted as detrimental to not only himself but also his surroundings. Additionally, the films do not merely portray rigid binaries, but, as we will see, some masculine performances will occupy a middle ground.

4.3.2 Defeated men

The second period under discussion relates strongly to the failing political ideologies of the newly established post-colonial Arab nations. This was particularly visualized after the devastating war of 1967, commonly referred to as the *naksa* (setback) or *hazīma* (defeat), which left the country almost bankrupt. In the second half of the 1960s more and more criticism was noticeable in cultural products – first and foremost in the books by Nagib Mahfuz as well as their adapted screenplays or the films he wrote the original scenarios for. The period of the great national Arab hero had finished and critical questions arose on the results of the revolution and the promises made by its leaders. Criticism was regulated by state censorship, for example it was impossible to directly criticize the president or question the revolution's merit, but it was possible to condemn state officials' corruption and the diminishing revolutionary spirit in society. The

war of '67 was then seen as the result of bad management and corruption in state offices and industries as well as politics.

In terms of gender representations there is a shift towards more superficial characters that can no longer be defined as idealistic or heroic – whether they are men or women. They embody the moral corruption in a society gone out of control, interested in temporary and earthly pleasure. Nouri Bouzid (1995) considers the early 1970s a formative period for the new realism of the 1980s and early 90s in Arab cinema, in a period when questions arose to make a self-conscious and an activist cinema. In the present research, I have opted to keep it as a separate era because of its intermediary status – in between the great nationalist films and heroes of the 50s and 60s and the antiheroes of the 1980s and 90s. In terms of context and censorship too this period is intermediary.[12] Apart from the period's formative and intermediary status, the films produced in this era were also particularly relatable to the social, political and economic changes that the country was undergoing during Anwar al-Sadat's reign. Walter Armbrust (1995) gives the period more allure and importance, too. Armbrust argues that "[I]t would not be an exaggeration to describe the new popular-culture style as basically antimodernist" (Armbrust 1995: 103). The codes of modernity that were presented in a synthesizing manner in films prior to the 1970s were now being used to emphasize the failure and humiliation of "the middle class modernist hero" (id. 103). The result was a socially aware cinema with depictions of defeated men opposing new hegemonic ideals of materialism and nouveau-riche bourgeoisie for men and women to aspire to.

On the one hand, the defeated men were depicted as being at a loss: they were unable to live up to the ideals that were upheld for years. Simultaneously, these ideals were exposed as lies, a veil barely covering deep-running social rifts. At least that was how many experienced the ensuing economic and social crises engulfing the country. Anwar al-Sadat's new policies and the eventual opening up to foreign investment resulted in depictions of a materialist society gone

12 A case in point is Chahine's film *al-'Asfur/The Sparrow* (1972) which was at first forbidden because of its critical stance toward the Nasir-era. The film was only allowed to be screened after the 'victory' of 1973 in the October war.

astray in films from the 70s. Although not immediately comparable to the neo-realism of the 80s, the contexts were already set for the upcoming new styles: impoverished working and middle classes, cracks in the social mobility ideal, the 'new city' as décor for the films and the new ideal of money and Western consumer goods. The nouveau riche bourgeois ideal for men (and women) was portrayed as contributing to the further hollowing out of the revolution's socialist idealism in favor of a new, selfish ruling class. These new men proved to be old-fashioned patriarchs in disguise, hiding behind a thin veil of modern clothing and a Western lifestyle. As is clear from this short description, the masculine types in this era are much less clearly defined than the more recognizable types of the 50s and 60s, shattering for the first time the idealized image of an 'Arab hero'.

4.3.3 Lower classes monopolize the screen

In the 1980s, then, we can distinguish a new period and development in Egypt's film production. These films belong to a neo-realist 'wave', made by a group of directors that studied together at the Cinema Institute and often worked collaboratively on their films. They were each other's screenwriters, directors of photography, directors, and acted in each other's films. They also had a similar style, growing up together watching the same films on television and in the cinemas, and being educated at the same institute, which is why they are sometimes referred to as "the children of Abu Seif, the street and *Coca-Cola*" (Shafik 2001: 62). Until today, some of them are iconic directors of Egyptian cinema, such as Muhammad Khan, Dawud 'Abd al-Sayyid, Ra'fat al-Mihi, and Khayri Bishara, while others have passed away, such as 'Atif al-Tayyib.

This mixed background of realism, melodrama and aspects of consumer society was clearly visible in their films, coined as 'the middle class going to the supermarket' by Walter Armbrust (1995: 102). They all went out into the streets to film the lives and woes of the local, often impoverished, urban Egyptians – with the occasional exception in the countryside (*al-Tawq wa-l-Iswirra/The Necklace and the Bracelet*, Bishara 1986). The 1980s also saw the return of female directors to the industry who had been virtually non-existent ever

since the 1940s' consolidation of the industry and its subsequent masculinization.[13] Inas al-Daghaydi was the first female director with controversial feature films about women's issues. Together with Nadia Hamza, al-Daghaydi was the most prolific female director of the 80s. The case of women directors is, however, discussed in a separate chapter.

As a result of the conservative liberalism of president Anwar al-Sadat in the 1970s, directors now tended to focus on the negative results of a devastating economic policy. This is why they focused their attention on the diminishing middle classes in Egypt, the difficult economic situations of the working classes, like taxi drivers or young, unemployed men. An interesting development too in the 1980s is the return to the female masculinity of the so-called *ma'allima*. The *ma'allima*, the female version of the *ma'allim*, is a famous local, *baladi* female type that was already depicted in the 1950s. Tahiyya Carioca is perhaps one of the most famous incarnations of this type of masculine woman in films from the 50s – in the sense of imitating characteristics associated with masculinity, not in looks or outer appearances – who continued to infatuate men both on- and off-screen, such as Edward Said (2000), with her strong decisive attitude and power over men and other women in her films.

Apart from this female type, this chapter on the 1980s and 90s discusses on the one hand the *futuwwa* and on the other hand the underdog stemming from the impoverished working and middle classes. The *futuwwa* is a very old and idealized notion of masculinity, which gained prominence in the 1980s after Nagib Mahfuz's publication of *The Harafish* (1977).[14] The novel's different stories of the Nagi-family were adapted to the screen, and the 80s produced several

13 Although disappearing behind the camera as directors within the popular and commercial cinema industry, women had turned to the less popular field of documentary filmmaking or continued to work as screenwriters or editors. Famous examples are Atiyyat al-Abnudi as documentary filmmaker, scenarists Nabiha Lutfi and Wafiyya Khairi, and the praised film editor from Yugoslavian descent, Mila George.

14 It was not Mahfuz's first novel to include such a character. In *The Children of Gebelawi* (1959) he already described his view on the traditional quarter, the *ḥāra*, with a similar character like the *futuwwa*.

films with this idealized masculinity. Although the films discussed will portray the historical *futuwwa*, other films have taken up a similar premise: of a young man revolting against oppression and injustice, usually embodied by wealthy old men. The portrayal of the *futuwwa* is, however, always consistent: guided by morally superior motives opposing his antagonist, the young man violently takes what is 'rightfully' his. Next to the *futuwwa* are the impoverished middle classes, embodied by the underdog male. Viola Shafik questions these films' subplots of social mobility and corrupt nouveau-riche, exposing, she says, filmmakers' bourgeois middle class angst (Shafik 2007: 280). The male underdog is then the representative of a middle class angst of being dethroned and having to substitute morality, culture, and manners (which they claim to have a monopoly on) for the new values of money, materialism, and consumerism (the perceived threat as embodied by the socially mobile lower classes).

4.3.4 New discourses of gender and sexuality

The last period I will deal with is situated in the new millennium and follows a period of artistic renewal in Arab cinema. Malek Khouri (2005) labeled films from the period starting halfway through the 90s *New Arab Cinema*, insisting on the films' new approaches to cinema as well as new taboo subjects that were tackled. Khouri distinguishes four major themes in this period, relating to the particular historical, social and political contexts the directors were making these films in. These different topics include a renewed discourse on gender and sexuality, religious dogmatism, national identity and self-determination, and a self-reflexive mode of filmmaking. Although not entirely 'new' themes, the way of addressing them differed greatly from previous eras, in part because of the films' anti-modernist look upon the real world. Framing these themes within the century-old discussions on the cultural rebirth of Arab society, the *Nahḍa*, Khouri aims to uncover the films' increased interest in old themes portrayed through a new lens. The popular films discussed here all signal a sort of backlash against this cultural renewal, with depictions of men and masculinities in 'crisis', or a reinforcement of patriarchy to safeguard masculine domination.

We can discern again a few new forms of old types of masculinity, like *ma'allim* and *futuwwa* on the one hand, and the educated professional – whether intellectual or 'Westernized' nouveau riches – on the other. At the same time, it seems that a return to these 'old' types of masculinities we discerned in the 1950s and 60s did not come with a similarly renewed gender politics. On the contrary, these 'new men' – a result of years of bad political and economic management, increasing unemployment and poverty – have on the one hand the traditional paternalist values that push them to find work and 'to become a man' as the natural providers of the family. On the other hand, they continue to be unable to do so and end up in a kind of intermediary zone with no clear way out. The only straw they hang on to is their masculinity, interpreted as a father-figure that has the right to resort to violence in order to keep his position of power, or portrayed as a useless youth in need of the aforementioned father-figure. Their physical masculine performance is the only bearer of their manhood they have left according to the films. These often young men are also – and literally since 2011 – described as criminals, *baltagiyya*,[15] a term which gained prominence in popular mass media and news outlets after the revolution of 2011.

The modern patriarch represents the other end of the spectrum of male types. Contrary to the *baltagi*, this type hides his new-found masculine domination behind his fancy clothing and modern lifestyles, similar to the patriarchs of the 70s. The difference is that these contemporary men pretend to express respect for women, instead of the regular abuse that was so prevalent in the 70s' films. In the late 2000s, the new patriarch asserts him domination under the pretense of protection and care, which quickly descends into control. Different also are the women's reactions: they consent to the man's paternalism and condescension. Gone are the gender relations that propose equality, or at least offer women the possibility of take up strong and decisive roles. Instead, male-female inequality is naturalized through the physical differences between men and women. Interestingly, these modern patriarchs – like their 'criminal' colleagues – also seem to

15 See chapter 8, footnote 3 for the meaning and the use of the term *baltagi* (plural *baltagiyya*).

hang on to a dated concept of masculinity in order to safeguard their manhood and their domination over women. Their strong interest in a physical masculine performance (muscularity) furthermore predisposes them to violence as a 'natural' element of masculine identity.

4.4 The film text and textual analysis

The analysis of the films in this project consists of a textual analysis, focusing on questions of narrative and mise-en-scène. What does it mean when we look at a film as a text or talk about film texts? A film text (in the semiotic sense) is constructed in a certain way, conveying meaning using a specific language, to a specific audience and in a specific time and culture. But who produces the text? Is it the director, the producer, the actor(s), the scriptwriter, or all of those? How does a text 'mean'? Who is the narrator? And when does a text 'mean' something? Is the meaning produced by the audience, the ones consuming the text and giving additional meaning to it? Stuart Hall, while recognizing the merit of content analysis, warns however against a rigid textual analysis alone, claiming that the encoding and decoding of the message are essential complementary processes (Hall 2001: 508). Textual analysis of the film thus also requires taking into account its context, "the discursive form of the message" (id. 508). Referencing Gerbner, Hall notes that representation is never just an image, but it consists of discursive messages about what the images depict. Images about men and masculinity are not actual men or masculinity, but are messages about them made in a particular discursive context.

Considering a film as a text in context, means that the film is also an artifact that needs to be analyzed in order to draw valuable conclusions from it with regard to prevalent discursive practices in a society. To this end, it is necessary to approach a text from a wide angle of perspectives using different methods. Close textual readings are done through analyzing signs in texts and what they mean, with questions such as: What are the particular masculine signs that texts offer and show?, How are certain signs used in relation to others and

can we distinguish certain relations of power? Not only signs are analyzed; also the way formal elements are used in the film to construct meaning. David Bordwell (2007) offers an interesting way of looking at the text through historical poetics. With attention paid to the aesthetics of the film text, this approach uncovers formal elements in the text that have arisen in a particular historical period to a specific effect in creating meaning. Poetic approaches focusing on the 'aesthetic' have often been criticized for their interest in 'high culture' or an aesthetics of cinema, yet the usefulness of the approach cannot entirely be denied because of the way it has been used by some of its practitioners.

Bordwell has warned however against 'interpreting' a film text (1989) and instead argues for inferring meaning from the text instead of 'simply' reading it. But interpreting a text is something we will always have to do to a certain extent. As long as the scholar is able to keep it to a minimum when writing about a film, and is able to build upon cues in the text – and other similar texts – we can draw more meaningful conclusions that can also be verified. Therefore Bordwell asserts that historical poetics are concerned with questions like "to what problems does its composition represent an attempted solution?" (Bordwell 1989: 265). Instead of 'reading' certain theories into the films, I use formalist elements to answer certain questions about the construction of masculine identities in a specific historical context. However, purely formalist approaches might ignore the films' specific contexts as well as other texts and consider only certain films for their aesthetic value. Ideological approaches to film texts are subjective, assuming a unified audience. Keeping in mind the limitations and strengths of each approach is a way to formally justify possible discursive practices in the text.

How to define the film text itself then? The language of films includes the production context of those films. Films are not created (nor consumed) in a social, historical, or cultural vacuum. They relate to and are constituted through the society and specific cultural context in which they are produced. But films are also constructed *as texts*, with a 'language', which consists of several *layers* of text. The first layer of the text is what formalists call *story* (Rimmon-Kenan 1983),

fabula (Bordwell 1985), or *histoire* (Genette 1988). This is the actual story, linear from its chronological beginning until its end. The *story* consists of both the events and the characters moving around in them, the story stripped of its filmic or narrative elements, the bare storyline. This chronological story is often not the way the work of art tells the story; it would be uninteresting without using any narrative techniques to enliven the story.

The story is thus contrasted with the plot or the way it is presented in its final version to the audience (what Rimmon-Kenan labeled *text*, or Bordwell called *syuzhet* and Genette called *récit*). The plot is not necessarily a chronological account of the events (it could be though) and is constructed through all kinds of narrative strategies (flashback, flashforward, points of view, voice-over, etc.) as well as cinematic techniques (jump cut, continuity editing, sound, lighting, film angles, etc.). The point of these strategies and techniques is to create a certain effect and give (additional) meaning to a text. They can consist of lighting and sound (diegetic or extradiegetic), the language people use, what they say and how they say it, editing and editing techniques (continuity editing), or meaningful camera movements (pan, tilt, zoom, etc.). The analysis looks at to what effect they are used. For example in film, close-ups can be very personal, emphasizing certain emotions in the character, a technique often used in melodrama because of the genre's emphasis on emotion and empathy with the main character. Additionally, when a director consciously, and with a specific effect in mind, in a shot-reverse-shot between a man and woman, uses close-ups for the woman, and a medium shot for the man this might indicate a greater empathy from the part of the woman, emphasizing her facial features, expressions and reactions, as opposed to the more 'rational' and emotionally stable man, emphasizing his physical sturdiness and him being less emotionally involved.

The third layer is the narrative (*narration*, Genette) which relates to the actual person(s) telling the story. Mieke Bal (2009) defines the narrative as the textual layer. The question here is *who* is telling the story? Her interest is not so much in terms of the actual actor impersonating the narrator, but as "a function and not a person, which expresses itself in the language that constitutes the text" (Bal 2009:

15). The narrative can be constructed in a complex manner with narratives inside narratives, each with different points of view and different characters, using diegetic (e.g. sound of footsteps) and extradiegetic (voice over, music that only the audience could hear, etc.) elements. For example concerning gender, an analysis of the different narratives in the film text informs us which different points of view and narratives are presented in the film, and what their relationship is to one another. What is the leading narrative? What does this tell us about a possible gender order in the film text? A very interesting example is the 1957 film *al-Futuwwa/The Tough Guy* (Salah Abu Sayf) in which the story, at first glance, focuses on Farid Shawqi's character Haridi. But when looking more closely at the plot, we notice that the decisive changes are made by another guiding character, Tahiyya Carioca[16] in her role as Hosniya. In chapter 5 I will go into more detail concerning this film and a discussion on the male type of *ma'allim* and the popular (*sha'bi*) hero.

When we analyze the film text, then, it is necessary to describe how these different layers relate to each other and what meaning their relationship could possibly give to the text. As such, the film is an incredibly rich text with many different angles to approach it from or to focus on. First in line is the film's production context, with attention given to certain visible and invisible elements in the film text. These would include mise-en-scène (such as décor, space, light), the editing style, genre conventions, sound techniques, the composition of shots and camera angles and techniques. Second are analyses of the specific content of the film: the actual narrative, the way the story is told and by whom, the presence and use of stars and types. And last is the reception of the film, which includes the way audiences and film critics interpret the films, its popular appeal and reactions to it. For this research I have not included an audience response analysis, but reactions to the films – whenever available online on popular fora or in

16 Tahiyya Carioca is famous for her lower class impersonations as well as her belly dance performances. Edward Said described her as "a highly visible *femme fatale* in Egyptian films" (2000: 347). He also recalls her initial roles as *almeh* (*'ālima*, learned woman), witty, educated, and a kind of courtesan. Later in her career, directors cast her in a rougher version of the *almeh*, as the *ma'allima* who is discussed in chapter 9.

printed articles – are taken into account to understand how the film was received and to get extra insights into what these reactions might convey about gender and gender relations. All these elements need to be taken into consideration when analyzing films in order to draw informed, verifiable and probable – yet not necessarily definitive – conclusions from the film as a cultural artifact produced in a culturally specific context.

5. Criminals and heroes

In 1952 the Free Officers took hold of the country in a bloodless coup and popular cinema was to become part and parcel of the construction of a new national image for both Egypt and Egyptians (Gordon 2002: 8-10). Before the coup, a strict censorship law prevented filmmakers from making films that depict and criticize class relations in a deeply divided feudal monarchy.[1] As a result, many films from the 1930s and 40s followed strict popular patterns and storylines, avoiding strong criticism of 'old money' aristocracy and class relations. Even the first attempts at 'realism' (the films *al-'Azima/Determination*, Kamal Salim 1939, and *al-Suq al-Sawda'/The Black Market*, Kamal al-Tilmisani 1945, are often quoted) did not venture past the strict class-divide, and generally depicted popular neighborhoods as folkloric and naive. In both films, too, the plot foresaw a dominant and positive role for the effendiyya-classes[2] as the new educated urban middle class opposed to the local and uneducated 'traditionalists'.

Roles of men and women and their depictions were limited to the romantic singer (e.g. Farid al-Atrash's stage character),[3] the lower

1 Walter Armbrust (2000b) notes directors' dismay at these censorship laws and the hope for radical changes after the coup, quoting director Salah Abu Sayf's ten-point program for better and clearer regulation of the cinema industry and the establishment of institutes and schools (id. 317). As Abu Sayf saw it, censorship laws established under the British protectorship were outdated and did not allow artistic liberty.

2 See also Jacob (2011) *Working Out Egypt*, in which he clearly describes the role of the new middle class effendiyya in early 20th century Egypt. He writes that the bourgeois effendi's masculinity was either denounced or valorized, but proved to be a quintessential identity for the imagination of the modern nation (id. 101). The effendi's identity was constructed around physical culture, education, and instilling nationalist feelings, thus creating an ideal modern Egyptian citizen alongside the other element of an Egyptian imaginary, the peasant (*fallāḥ*).

3 Sherifa Zuhur (2003) surveyed his star persona and notes how he "established the model of the male romantic star through a self-scripted and popularly accepted fusion of his personal history with his screen persona" (Zuhur 2003: 276). Of importance is his ability to "fit in" with lower classes

working class (e.g. in the film *Law Kunt Ghani/If I Were Rich*, Henry Barakat 1942) or the effendiyya (e.g. *al-'Azima/Determination*, Kamal Salim 1939; but also in *Ghazal al-Banat/Flirtation of Girls*, Anwar Wagdi 1949). Earlier in the 1920s and 30s Bedouin and historic films and, later, musicals were very popular, with characters like triumphant Arab heroes (*Lashin*, Fritz Kramp 1938)[4] or romantic lovers (e.g. singer Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab in *al-Warda al-Bayda'/The White Rose*), or both together in Umm Kulthum's film debut *Widad* (Fritz Kramp 1936). Walter Armbrust (2000a: 199) notes that "[b]efore the 1950s male characters in Egyptian films and fan magazines were usually associated with a bourgeois Western-looking lifestyle." Later films (from the 70s onward) do not question a similar bourgeois ideal, though changes in style and topics are discernable, most prominently the choice of how to depict men and women as new and ideal national images.

Gender representations were indirectly followed up by the censorship law, which primarily focused on class relations, eventually also limiting gender roles. There were strict gender divisions in most films – apart from the musicals and comedies that include famous Egyptian dancers or singers – with an almost burlesque depiction of gender relations, e.g. men subjected to their domineering wives at home. These stories are not necessarily emancipative, but rather confirm gender roles based on inequality and binary differences related to space and who occupies it. Although most of these comedic

coming from a relatively outcast social class (a Syrian-Druze immigrant to Egypt), but also to establish his star image and adorn it with 'truth' and sincerity, essential elements in order to be and become a star (Dyer 1998).
4 Kramp's film *Lashin* is similar to the story of Spartacus but with far less glorification of the male physique as Stanley Kubrick's 1960 epic *Spartacus*. In *Lashin* a poor village rises up against the unjust rich – represented by the king and his advisors. Lashin is the name of an army officer and the only trustworthy man at Court, but the king is surrounded by liars and ultimately removes Lashin from his position. The censorship committee forced the director to change the end of the film – when the king was supposed to die at the hand of a revolting population – and turn it into a triumphant victory for the king, reinstating Lashin as his advisor. *Lashin*'s alternative ending was a necessity in monarchical Egypt, for such messages of a proletarian revolt against a country's unjust rulers were deemed too instigating for Egypt's politically inspired censors.

and stereotypical roles for men and women did not change immediately upon independence, after 1952 new roles for men and women were provided by the cinema industry, partly because of the industry's heavy reliance on a melodramatic mode. According to Gordon (2002: 11), the genre-driven studio-based cinema of 'Abd al-Nasir's Egypt "provides an alternate reading of genre", one that allows to read those films as historical texts reminiscent of the social and political conditions of their time. For my analysis here, Walter Armbrust's assertion about genre conventions will prove pivotal. Armbrust (1995: 118) notes that genre conventions function in a semantic field where audience and filmmaker collide, while simultaneously commercial films might subvert the very conventions they subscribe to, allowing for an alternative reading. In this chapter I will demonstrate how gender representations have changed during the 50s, focusing on men and masculinities while not disregarding women, and discuss the new hegemonic types these modernist films construct.

5.1 The *Ma'allim*: Violence and power

One of the prominent masculine types in films from the 1950s is the violent and muscle-yielding *ma'allim*, which could be translated literally as 'master' or – in more film-related vocabulary – as 'Boss'. I prefer the term 'Boss', as the *ma'allim* is often the leader of a gang of criminals in local popular neighborhoods. Of course, a *ma'allim* is not necessarily a criminal character, but a criminal gang leader is often referred to as *ma'allim*. It can furthermore be a respectful title for local shop owners and entrepreneurs in lower class areas. The *ma'allim*'s role in the film is furthermore defined by the film's genre and its overall theme. He is sometimes ridiculed, sometimes portrayed as the 'evil' mastermind. The character is also not 'new' for a post-'52 cinema – in 1951 Hasan Ramzi directed the cross-dressing farce *al-Ma'allim Bulbul/Master Bulbul* (see also chapter 9) – though its context and setting had changed remarkably. I want to emphasize that the *ma'allim* gained prominence after 1952, but is not limited to this period alone. The 1980s saw a vivid return to the character, albeit mixed up with the idealized *futuwwa*-type. Not to be underestimated is the actor who had

created his 'tough guy' star persona on screen, whose heydays were known in the 50s as '*malik al-tirsu*' (king of the third-class seats) and who also returned in the 1980s films as *futuwwa/ma'allim*: Farid Shawqi (1920-1998).[5]

The type is contingent to specific historical and social contexts, as well as the production context of the films. The year 1952 brought about a change in the cinema industry and new modes of filmmaking became more prominent, particularly melodrama and melodramatic realism. Ginette Vincendeau's (1989) analysis of poetic realist women's films from 1930s France describes this filmic mode as one representing a world "dominated by fate, coincidence, circularity, and nostalgia" (id. 52). These are also hallmarks of 1950s Egyptian melodrama (Malkmus and Armes 1991: 101-2), although we need to bare the specificities of an Egyptian context in mind. The poetic realism present in some Egyptian films of the 50s and 60s is particularly visible in the work of Salah Abu Sayf (1915-1996). I will discuss later in this chapter his film *al-Futuwwa/The Tough Guy* (1957), but also other films by Abu Sayf are prominent exponents of poetic realism, for example *Bidaya wa-Nihaya/Dead Among the Living* (1960). Not coincidentally, both films' scenarios were written with the help of, or based upon novels by, Nagib Mahfuz.

When genres and filmmaking modes change due to changing socio-political conditions, representational practices change accordingly. Where the *ma'allim* in *Master Bulbul* is not necessarily a criminal, chances are that they will be in the 'newer', post-'52 films thanks to the less strict censorship on portrayals of social malaise. More important are perhaps their similarities. One of the films discussed in this chapter (*The Tough Guy*, Salah Abu Sayf 1957) portrays recognizable patterns of this male type. In both *The Tough Guy* and *Master Bulbul* the bosses are represented as very traditionalist and conservative – often southern-Egyptian – characters. One of their main and indispensable features is a mustache, that ever-present symbol of

5 Armbrust's (2000a) analysis of Farid Shawqi's star persona looks at a lesser known aspect of the actor's public persona: the image of the family-man, being married to the singer, dancer and actress Huda Sultan. In some of his films too, Armbrust argues, he has portrayed this family image. My concern here is with his more famous persona of the brute and the villain.

masculinity. Men with mustaches in Egyptian films are not always doing well, though, and often the mustache is reduced to an object of ridicule.[6] The tough-guy masculinity of the bosses requires an exhibition of these ubiquitous signs of masculinity; paradoxically, this does not always include heroic parts in the narrative for these types of men.

Often shown wearing traditional southern Egyptian dress – with *galabiyya* and turban, and a walking stick showing their rank and status – the similarities between the 'old' (pre-'52) and 'new' (post-'52) *ma'allimīn* are not limited to their looks. They are also localized and usually appear in urban settings, as is the case in *The Tough Guy* and *Master Bulbul*.[7] Even in more recent films from the 1980s and later, the *ma'allim* is often portrayed as a southern-Egyptian man that moved to the city at some point. They usually inhabit public spaces, like shops (fruit-, vegetable-, or spice shops) or traditional café's (the *qahwa baladī*) and perform other 'manly jobs' as well, such as butcher (e.g. in *al-Sifira 'Aziza/Super 'Aziza*, Tolba Radwan 1961). Considering their space, their looks and their work we could say they are represented as traditionalist, 'masculine' men (or the occasional woman). How does this description result in representations of this *ma'allim* in specific films and what can such analysis tell us about their perceived role in both films and society?

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6 Actor Husayn Isma'il – always with mustache – is reproached for his unsatisfying work in the film *Tamr Hinna* (Husayn Fawzi 1957), after which his boss decides to shave his mustache, since he is always swearing on it as a way to safeguard his honor. A big drama ensues and the man is shamed when he forcefully loses his mustache. Also in Youssef Chahine's *al-Ard/The Land* (1970) the main character's mustache is shaved as punishment for his actions. A more recent example is actor Muhammad Sa'd in the film *Katkut* (Ahmad 'Awad 2006) who also needs to shave his mustache. Again the character goes completely insane over the prospect of losing his "apex of masculinity", undressing and suggesting to shave his entire body. In both films, we can read a certain rape narrative in the shaving of the mustache, the men's ultimate and untouchable marker of masculinity.

7 Other examples abound, for example the 1956 police film *Rasif Nimra Khamsa/Platform 5* (Niyazi Mustafa), the thriller *Raya wa-Sikina/Raya and Sikina* (Salah Abu Sayf 1952), both with Farid Shawqi in two distinct roles, and the 1954 cross-dressing comedy with Isma'il Yasin and Riyad al-Qasabgi, *al-Anisa Hanafi/Miss Hanafi* (Fatin 'Abd al-Wahhab).

5.1.1 The Tough Guy

An example of a *ma'allim*'s performance is visible in the 1957 film *The Tough Guy*, directed by Salah Abu Sayf. The film's title would indicate it is actually about the *futuwwa*-type, but the main characters are never really referred to as *futuwwa*. There is furthermore discussion on whether the film actually portrays that particular type (Salah 2012). Nahid Salah notes that *The Tough Guy* (*al-Futuwwa*), although the title would suggest otherwise, in the first place discusses shifting economic policies and a corrupt society in which the rich have no pity for the poor instead of *fatwana*,[8] similar to Malkmus' and Armes' claim about the film, with its interest in the 'mechanics of capitalism' (Malkmus and Armes 1991: 102). But Salah's concept of the *futuwwa* is ahistoric and confined to a fixed set of characteristics, which are not my main concern here.[9] Neither am I concerned with a structural description of certain *futuwwa*-films, as do Malkmus and Armes. Rather, the main question addressed in the analysis of the film, is how its specific gender dynamics reveal a certain doubt in male behavior, while certain aspects of the different characters are positively portrayed as masculine.

The film *The Tough Guy* is lauded for several reasons, not in the least because of the raw realism that Salah Abu Sayf depicts and of course the participation of Nagib Mahfuz in writing the script. The director

8 Interesting to note is that a similar perception of society was prevalent in the early 80s, after the gap between lower and upper classes had increased because of Sadat's *infitāḥ*.

9 Another example of an early *futuwwa*-film is Niyazi Mustafa's 1954 film *Futuwwat al-Husayniyya/Futuwwas of the Husayn-district*, also with Farid Shawqi. The difference with Abu Sayf's film is that the former has a rather positive message, somehow similar to what happened in the country at the time. The dictator-*futuwwa* was replaced by a just *futuwwa*, caring for the poor and disenfranchised. The director Niyazi Mustafa visualizes this in the final battle with his trademark comedy, when the owner of the café – depending on how the fight is going – continuously changes the pictures of the *ma'allimīn* – a reference, also, to the official pictures of the ruler (whether the king or the president) hanging behind the desks of police investigators or government employees. An interesting artist's rendition of this motif in Egyptian films is visible in the short film by Raed Yassin (from: http://www.raedyassin.com/works.25; acc. 23 October 2014).

has spent four months going to a large local vegetables market to study its economics and social relations (Abu Sayf 1996: 94), but the traders there did not appreciate his presence. The entire movie was later shot in a rebuilt market in the studios, reminiscent of the stylized realism of French poetic realism. The plot is supposed to be inspired by a true story in the vegetables market of Rod al-Farag (a few kilometers north of Cairo), according to Hasan Haddad (1993). According to the actual event, King Faruq was involved in the price hikes by a few rich traders who would give the king a slice of the profit. Whether or not this is a true story, in itself it does serve as an indication of the extent to which the royal family and the local rulers were perceived as corrupt by critics and the general population. It also indicates the new regime's propaganda, slandering the monarchy. Accordingly, many post-independence films reused and contributed to this perception when depicting the old regime as corrupt womanizers, drunks and gamblers.

Salah Abu Sayf was one of the most lauded Egyptian directors, with many of his films on the top list of Egyptian classics.[10] According to critic Hasan Haddad, the realist style of Abu Sayf meant more than simply depicting what was happening, it meant looking for reasons behind the present state. This element is certainly prevalent in *The Tough Guy*, which spends a lot of its reel time on explaining the way the market place – its main setting – operates. Abu Sayf has also often worked together with not only Nagib Mahfuz for his films' scripts, but also with actor Farid Shawqi as the embodiment of lost morals in *The Tough Guy* and *al-Asta Hasan/Foreman Hasan* (1952). In the latter film he played the role of an honorable working-class man lured into the clutches of a rich woman, but redeemed for his actions at the end, returning to his wife and son. Shawqi was also the bad guy in *Raya wa-Sikina/Raya and Sikina* (Salah Abu Sayf 1952), abducting ignorant girls to steal from and murder them, by order of *ma'allima* Raya. In *Dead*

10 Some of his most famous and lauded films are *Shabab Imra'a/Youth of a Woman* (1956), *La Anam/Sleepless* (1957) – with Fatin Hamama in a rare 'evil' role, *Ana Hurra/I Am Free* (1959), *Hamam al-Malatili/Malatili Bath* (1973), and *al-Saqqa Mat/The Waterbearer Is Dead* (1977).

Among the Living, Shawqi plays a supporting role as pimp, although his character is not as 'evil' as in *Raya and Sikina*.

Throughout his career, Abu Sayf has incorporated comedic and melodramatic features in his predominantly realist films. Although it is not within the scope of this research to extrapolate the specific features, qualities, effects and techniques of a melodramatic mode in Egyptian cinema in general – we would first need an assessment of to what extent it can be defined a filmic mode, rather than a genre[11] – I will have to explain a few of its dominant techniques and elements throughout the analyses. Linda Williams (1998: 42) argues in her account of Hollywood melodrama that "supposedly realist cinematic *effects* – whether of setting, action, acting, or narrative motivation – most often operate in the service of melodramatic *affects*." Abu Sayf, with his realist style, cannot be described as solely employing realism, for he applied too many different modes and techniques in his films. In *al-Zoga al-Tanya/The Second Wife* (1967), he used certain elements of cinematic neo-realism, such as filming on location, the (partial) use of non-professional actors and a local dialect. But, with its emphasis on the plights of the poor and its pathos affecting the audience to sympathize with the victim-heroine and her husband, both famous star actors, the basic mode of this film's narrative is melodramatic.

The present film under discussion employs a lot less pathos and emotionality. Instead, the film is not void of some comedy, because of its stereotypical depictions of southern Egyptians (usually as not too bright) and deriding the muscularity of certain men. The facial features and bodies of these *ma'allimīn* are an important marker of their identities, and the director's choice of Farid Shawqi and Zaki Rustum as the two main opponents works well to convey their upcoming conflict. The muscular body of Farid Shawqi, and the old but still strong looking body of Zaki Rustum (he was an Egyptian weightlifting champion in the 20s, and the quintessential example of an ideal Egyptian subject under colonial rule) are two examples of a

11 Peter Brooks (1976, 1995: viii-ix) in his analysis of elements of melodrama in French novels has argued that "melodrama is a coherent aesthetic system", but one that belongs to "a post-sacred era" in which the common everyday becomes meaningful. Film scholars (e.g. Gledhill 1987, Williams 1998) have taken up this premise and extended it to Hollywood cinema.

presumed ideal masculine body. Yvonne Tasker (1993: 232), referring to Dyer, reminds us of the paradox of muscular male bodies, functioning to reiterate the notion of male domination, while also pointing at the labor that went into achieving such a body, thus questioning its 'naturalness'. The muscularity of Farid Shawqi's star persona is emphasized in his embodiment of the mythical Arab poet and strongman 'Antar, in the film *'Antar bin Shaddad* (Niyazi Mustafa 1961).

The Tough Guy starts with a short text stating that in a not so distant past, the people's prospects to eat and chances to survive were in the hands of a wealthy few, indicating that the plot situates itself in feudal pre-1952 Egypt. Then we are introduced to the main character Haridi, a poor southern day-worker played by Farid Shawqi, who arrives in Cairo looking for work. After visiting his family – with a lengthy exchange of greetings – he arrives at a big market where he is introduced to the "seal of the market", a slap on his scruff.[12] The viewer is also immediately confronted with the violent power struggle that rules this market place, where newcomers are subjugated and have to work their way up the strict hierarchy of that market. Dancer and actress Tahiyya Carioca, in her role as Hosna, is a pivotal character in the film joining him at that very moment. She has been selling baskets at the market for some time and knows the local habits and market rules.

Haridi's first job is to replace a sick donkey, pulling a cart in order to earn some money. The image of Haridi's powerful torso and muscular body, together with the scene's montage are informative. Haridi – barefoot and sweating, clenching his *galabiyya* between his teeth – is pulling the cart, after which the camera cuts to his feet and back to his scruff, referring to the slap he received earlier and in order to establish his subordinated position. Then he is shown wrapping his feet with fabric, followed by another close-up of him pulling the cart

12 In Egypt this indicates a sign of disrespect towards the slapped person who is then considered as weak and eventually emasculated by the perpetrator. Slapping and other forms of physical violence are often used comedically, ridiculing the subjugated person. This too raises questions about masculine performances and particularly what is deemed unmasculine, which therefore requires opposition to it.

juxtaposed with a close-up of a donkey (including blinders) pulling a cart, establishing a bond between man and beast who are both not expected to think, but act.

These introductory scenes displaying Haridi's muscular body confirm the extreme strength and willpower of our future *ma'allim*, while they also portray the bad working conditions for the subordinated lower class workers to which Haridi initially belongs. It furthermore confirms Farid Shawqi's nickname as "the beast of the white screen".[13] This was not his own preferred nickname (Armbrust 2000a: 203), although this is how he is most vividly remembered by audiences. His many evil roles destined him to die or otherwise be punished for his actions. He tried to counter this image of him as a brute in some of the films whose production process he could influence.[14]

As soon as the donkey gets better, Haridi has to look for a new job. He arrives on the doorstep of the leading fruit and vegetables trader on the market, *ma'allim* Abu Zayd. Abu Zayd – played by Zaki Rustum (1903-1972) – is a ruthless man controlling the prices on the market. He holds all authority in the area, but abuses it through his authoritarian and criminal behavior, condoned by the country's rich thanks to his lucrative deals and good personal relations with the ruling classes. Considering the negative depiction of a pre-1952 Egypt in which the *ma'allim* of *The Tough Guy* flourishes, entertaining very close relations with the rich and corrupt regime, the character suffers automatically from a bad reputation with the audience. Abu Zayd is depicted as the ultimate bad guy, beating up homeless people and beggars – more precisely command others to do it for him – unscrupulous in business, selling at extremely high prices and with no compassion for anyone or anything. His famous words summarize the character: "*id-dinya zaḥma, khallīha tkhiff*" [it's a crowded world, let's relieve it a bit]. His relationship with the country's upper class also shows another element that often returns in Egyptian cinema in

13 His infamous title in Arabic is *waḥsh al-shāsha*, beast of the screen, referring to his many unsympathetic portrayals of 'bad guys'.
14 This includes *The Tough Guy* but also *Foreman Hasan*. In both films, his character repents at the end of the film.

general: how the wealthy were (and are) depicted as living their 'Western and bourgeois' lifestyles, while vigorously holding on to strict authoritarian rule to suppress lower classes and deny others a similar, liberal, lifestyle.

Farid Shawqi and Zaki Rustum have been portrayed as enemies in other films, for example in the film of the same era, *Rasif Nimra Khamsa/Platform Five* (Niyazi Mustafa, 1956), or have entered in an unlikely agreement as in the film *Sira' fi al-Wadi/Struggle in the Valley* (Youssef Chahine, 1954). Similar to *Foreman Hasan*, Farid Shawqi participated in writing the scenario of *Platform Five*, resulting in a similar storyline with the actor in a leading role and not merely as 'evil beast'. In both these films he heralds a family life, as father and protector, although in *Foreman Hasan* he needs to learn this the hard way. This storyline stands in stark contrast to the plot of *Struggle in the Valley*, where Shawqi plays the unequivocal bad guy, eventually causing a rift between his and Rustum's character, revealing their opportunist relationship. *Struggle in the Valley* also proclaims a message of modernity, when Shawqi's character Riyad is handed over to the police for due investigation, instead of being killed according to local tradition.[15]

Not only in films but also in the real world are Farid Shawqi and Zaki Rustum representatives of two very different backgrounds. Zaki Rustum is the son of a Pasha, born into a noble and rich family, with an aristocratic name. Farid Shawqi, however, is not only a popular working-class hero in his films; he was actually born into a working-class family in the popular and lower-middle class Cairene neighborhood Sayyida Zaynab. There is another very important difference between the two star actors. Whereas Farid Shawqi actively used films and other media to construct his image of a 'he-man' (Armbrust 2000: 202-3), Zaki Rustum mostly avoided the spotlights whenever he was not on a film set, slighty contradicting his stardom.

15 Southern Egypt is up until today famous for its vendettas (*tār*, in Standard Arabic *tha'r*), which are often portrayed in films situated in the rural south. Their portrayal is part of the modernism-traditionalism paradigm in Egyptian cinema, to which Armbrust (1995) has alluded with the 'codes of modernity'.

Both actors started their careers in one of the many theater troupes that were active in Cairo in the 1920s-40s; Zaki Rustum acted in the troupes of Georges Abyad and Ramsis, while Farid Shawqi was headhunted by the famous theater actor (and later film actor, scenarist and director) Yusif Wahbi. Both men have played slightly similar roles, as utterly evil bad guys or as loving and caring father figures. Zaki Rustum's physique did not allow him to be cast as a violent tough guy; he was too short and too old to convincingly stage such a muscular performance by the 1950s. On the other hand, his facial features – and particularly his piercing eyes and hawkish nose – allowed him to perform roles of strict, threatening and occasionally psychopathic figures. As such, and also because he was already a few decades older than his co-actors, he usually took on guiding roles, such as his character Abu Zayd, the boss, in *The Tough Guy*.

Violence is essential to the *ma'allim* type in this film, as a means to control his surroundings, while the type inhibits inconsistencies being both a 'traditional' local type, as well as venturing into the world of the rich. His dominance is protected through an extensive network of local footmen all the way to the top. If one were to venture into the realm of the *ma'allim*, the latter would be quick to destroy him or her and safeguard his dominant position. Farid Shawqi's character Haridi is obviously made of different material. He starts out as the naive ignorant peasant moving from the countryside to the city, but ends up as one of the strongest and most powerful men in the market – in part thanks to his physical power. The clash between the two men can also be read as a struggle between generations, the older *ma'allim* Abu Zayd against the young and ambitious *ma'allim* Haridi, as Malkmus and Armes did in their analysis of the film, labelling its genre 'male melodrama' (Malkmus and Armes 1991: 102). They argue that the 'genre' of the *futuwwa* films exposes a circular narrative, basing their analyses primarily on this one film where indeed a younger *futuwwa* replaces an older one. Yet, they failed to note the importance of one particular character in the film, Hosna, ignoring the film's gender relations – both among men and between men and women. Careful attention to the film's plot development shows that, for a film about 'tough men', it has very little to do with male agency.

Women actively participate in the plot, if not guiding it, similar to other films by Salah Abu Sayf such as *Raya and Sikina* and *La Anam/Sleepless* (1957). In the man's world, that is, the market place, there is one woman who plays an important role: Tahiyya Carioca's character Hosna. The only other woman of note in the film is the corrupt rich woman, Thoraya *Hānim* (Lady Thoraya, played by Mimi Shikib). At a certain point, Hosna and Thoraya clash at a cocktail party, in which Hosna as the local '*baladi*' woman gains the upper hand but is removed from the scene by her already rich husband Haridi. Haridi slaps her and tells her he does not want to see her again, a very important shift in the power balance between the two characters. While Hosna has played the main role in the plot against Abu Zayd and has always continued to support Haridi – she used him primarily as a tool to get what she wants – the roles are turned around when Haridi has enough money of his own and no longer needs Hosna, but rather Thoraya *Hānim*, to get more influence in higher political circles.

Important to note is that Haridi had not shown any violence toward Hosna for as long as he himself remained in a subordinated position vis-à-vis not only the *ma'allim* and Hosna, but the whole market place. Indeed, Haridi accepted a relationship based on equality with his girlfriend (and later his wife) Hosna, and with all the other men with whom he made a business deal. Having reached the peak of masculinity as the new *ma'allim*, he changes entirely from a hardworking, honorable and respectable – though be it a bit naive – man into a lazy and 'evil' character who no longer considers his wife as his equal, but rather considers women as disposable means to an end. With regard to his partners, he no longer respects their opinions nor does he care for the weak in society, as he did when he was still one of them. After he fought and won the 'cold war' – but also the actual physical fight – between him and Abu Zayd, he himself starts to occupy a hegemonic position in the market and as such starts acting accordingly.

His position can be considered hegemonic and not only authoritarian – the same is true for the previous *ma'allim* as well as the next – because he was able to attain his statute through a limited use of violence (which is part of his power struggle) and, more

importantly, negotiations. In as much as his struggle for power is at first instigated by his girlfriend who inspires him with an ideal of equality in order to fight a corrupt 'old system' – represented by the *ma'allim* – so is his final achievement of power accomplished through accepting and abusing that same system. The film as such does offer an opportunity to adapt for the better a corrupt and patriarchal system that oppresses and keeps subjugated a whole facet of the population: those who do not have the power nor the wealth to stand up for themselves. That chance for equality, where everyone – including women embodied by Hosna – works together on an equal footing, is ultimately squandered by the very man who profited from the support he received.

The film also shows that power is a fluctuating and fragile 'whole', exhibited by the different *ma'allim*-characters in the plot. Abu Zayd's strength relied upon his good relations with the upper-classes essentially protecting him, as well as his forced cooperation with the smaller traders in the market. As tough as his masculinity appears to be in the public market space, his soft and flirtatious nature with both Thoraya *Hānim* and a young male secretary in an official's office give away the internal inconsistencies and contradictions of his identity.[16] Haridi's strength is the result of the successful cooperation between those smaller traders bearing a grudge against their common enemy, one of them – perhaps the 'toughest', definitely the smartest – being a woman. Further, he came to power through an intricate plot development, slowly but surely undermining his enemy's hegemonic position with the help of his wife Hosna, a rather 'feminine' trait in a film that is supposed to deal with such 'masculine' and violent types. And just like Abu Zayd, Haridi turns soft and meek in the presence of a woman, allowing a glimpse behind this masquerade of a tough masculine façade. Shawqi's Haridi, however, will not let himself be caught flirting with any official's male secretary nor does he surround

16 A more explicit reference to a homosexual *ma'allim* can be found in Hasan al-Imam's film *Zo'a' al-Mida"/Midak Alley* (1963), based on the novel by Nagib Mahfuz. The author is more explicit than the film about the homosexuality of the *ma'allim*, yet the character is present in the film as well. In *The Tough Guy* the scene is short, open to interpretation and subject to a queer reading.

himself with tough muscular men, as opposed to Rustum's contradictory character, Abu Zayd.

5.1.2 Super 'Aziza

The second film is different in approach, perhaps less realist, certainly more comedic. The film *Super 'Aziza* (Tolba Radwan 1961) also differs in representation of the timeframe, the 1950s and 60s.[17] Tolba Radwan (n.d.) has not made many films, but the few films he did direct, were often great successes. He regularly co-directed with Salah Abu Sayf and was significantly influenced by the latter's realist style. Most of the films in Radwan's repertoire were co-productions with in the first place Abu Sayf[18] but also others like the comedy-director Fatin 'Abd al-Wahhab[19] and melodrama-director Hilmi Halim.[20] Tolba Radwan's Cairo is different from Abu Sayf's in that Radwan is perhaps more of a cultural ambassador for the city. He has a talent for location hunting around the city, resulting in beautiful historical scenery in his films. Reminiscent of 'Abd al-Wahhab he adds some comedy to the otherwise quite serious plot and subject matter, while Hilmi Halim's influence has left a melodramatic mark on Radwan's films. The results are very entertaining yet timely and topical films containing a wealth of information about 1960s Cairo and Egypt.

Super 'Aziza is a folkloric story loosely based on one of the stories of the Banu Hilal, a corpus of folk tales about the adventures of an Arab tribe moving through Northern Africa.[21] The *ma'allim* in this film,

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17 The film *Super 'Aziza* is often mistranslated. In Arabic, *sifira* and *safira* look similar and usually the title is thus incorrectly read as *al-Safira 'Aziza*, meaning 'ambassador' 'Aziza.

18 For example the films *al-Tariq al-Masdud/The Closed Road* (1958), *Mugrim fi Agaza/A Thief on Holiday* (1958), *Ana Hurra/I'm Free* (1959), *Law'it al-Hubb/Agony of Love* (1960).

19 For example *Isma'il Yasin Bulis Harbi/Isma'il Yasin Military Policeman* (1958), *Hallaq al-Sayyidat/Womens' Barber* (1960).

20 For example *al-Qalb luh Ahkam/The Heart Has its Reasons* (1956), *Hikayat Hubb/A Love Story* (1959).

21 The Banu Hilal were a group of Bedouin tribes from the Arabian peninsula, but had moved towards Egypt and later to other parts of Northern Africa somewhere in the 10th and 11th centuries. The story that inspired the film is about 'Aziza, daughter of the ruler of Tunis, who locked up the beautiful

played by the tall and strong ʻAdli Kasib, is yet another contradictory character that squanders his sister's inheritance on beautiful women while simultaneously keeping a very close eye on the whereabouts of both his wife and sister. He is supposedly a 'man of honor' but is in fact an autocratic patriarch, challenged by ʻAziza's suitor, a young and handsome schoolteacher played by Shukri Sarhan. This time, *maʻallim* ʻAbbas is a butcher, and his criminal activity extends beyond selling illegally slaughtered meat. He also beats up and occasionally kills any man who tries to oppose him and his business or drops an eye on his beautiful sister. The schoolteacher, Ahmad, moves in the flat next to his and is introduced to ʻAziza (played by Suʻad Husni), whom he is infatuated with, but only after he realizes she is *the* 'Super ʻAziza' everyone talks about. Ahmad is representative of the effendiyya, the educated yet impoverished middle class aspiring men that had taken on a prominent role in Egyptian mass media such as film.

ʻAbbas does not trust the suitor and reckons Ahmad is only interested in ʻAziza's money – the money he is spending on other women – and might claim it as soon as Ahmad marries her. In fact, it is ʻAziza who is using Ahmad as a tool to get her money back from her abusive brother. As in *The Tough Guy*, a woman is at the basis of the plot and takes initiative, but in a male-dominated society she needs to play by the rules in order to get what she wants. Both ʻAziza in *Super ʻAziza* and Hosna in *The Tough Guy* are "bargaining with patriarchy" (Kandiyoti 1988: 275), or negotiating for their own benefit through an accepted set of rules in a patriarchal system. This attitude will obviously return in many more films, but it is particularly exemplary in films depicting an extreme variant of the Egyptian male that the *maʻallim* with his lush mustache and muscular, virile body surely is.

There is a big difference between the male characters that both women use in their bargain. While Hosna chooses another 'tall and strong' guy to be physically able to conquer the existing *maʻallim* – which he eventually does, but is destroyed in the process – ʻAziza

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Yunis, son of the Sultan of the Hilal-tribe, in her palace. The stories were often told in the traditional *ṣandūq al-dunya*, a kind of puppet theatre, which was also sometimes referred to as "al-sifira ʻAziza" (From: al-Jarida, 16 October 2007).

chooses a schoolteacher who has no intention of becoming a new *ma'allim*, but eventually does challenge 'Abbas physically. As a result, although this was never intended by either party, Ahmad uses not his brains (against the illiterate *ma'allim*) but rather his youthful physical strength to win the upper hand. In this way, Ahmad's male type – the educated middle class – shows several paradoxes as well. He is portrayed as an educated man, respecting women as well as local traditions, but whose intellectual advantage is finally deserted and rendered useless against 'Abbas.

Super 'Aziza is a comedy with melodramatic features and offers subversions of those images of physically strong men. But, as Dyer (2002b: 4) has noted, pointing at the constructed nature of those images and performances, does not necessarily deconstruct their normativity. The comedy and laughter work to differentiate, as the stereotypical figure of 'Abbas proves to us. 'Abbas is literally a caricature of the *ma'allim*, with his imposing physique and prominent mustache – not coincidentally all his *ṣubyān*[22] are young and skinny boys, and noticeably shorter than himself, emphasizing his tall and powerful figure. The film continuously refers to male strength in all its facets, including sexual performances. These references to male physique are simultaneously subversive through the caricature of the *ma'allim*, but they are also reaffirmed at some point in the film. The male characters are contradictory, like 'Abbas' hypocrisy and double standards, or Ahmad's renouncement of his 'enlightened' reasoning. However, by allowing Ahmad to 'imitate' 'Abbas's violence, the film's ending discloses a kind of ambiguity towards gender identities and gender relations. For, while 'Aziza refused any sexual relations with Ahmad as long as he would not 'man up', she is infatuated with his ultimate acceptance of primitive violence.

In both films we can thus see that the aspirant-*ma'allim* imitates his predecessor, either willingly or not. The movies seem to suggest that the only way to fight against this type of men is imitating their behavior and using their features in order to position oneself on top.

22 The word *ṣubyān* is plural of *ṣabīy*, which means 'boy', or here referring to the younger apprentices and men helping in his butchery.

Haridi obviously 'imitates' the 'original' *ma'allim*, who also turns out to have replaced yet an earlier 'original' and so on, which shows that the masculine role they perform is just that: a performance, a continued imitation of a perceived 'original'. Their own violent behavior proves to be self-destructive because the men at the end of the film lose and – in the case of Haridi – are replaced once again. As evidenced at the end of *The Tough Guy*, the continuous copying will go on as long as there's a system in place that favors such types of men and such masculinities which are simultaneously required to keep such an abusive system in power. The men – on whose bodies these relations of power are played out – will continue to copy and imitate, to out-perform their predecessor, in such a way that eventually their masculinity is unveiled as a parody.

For Frederic Jameson, parody offers "that still latent feeling that there exists something *normal* compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic" (Jameson 1983: 114). In this sense, the parody of this form of masculinity does not necessarily do away with a normative hegemonic ideal (its opposite). This normative ideal is embodied by the effendi masculinity of Ahmad in *Super 'Aziza*, while Abu Sayf's *The Tough Guy* is more pessimistic in his vision of the capitalist structure of the market place. This could well be the main reason for Nahid Salah's criticism on the film's use of the ideal masculinity of *futuwwa* in its title: its absence of an 'honorable' portrayal of a *futuwwa*-like male who would 'save the day'. But for Judith Butler, gender parody shows that the 'normal' has already been destabilized simply by mocking it (Butler 1990: 138), as is the case with 'Abbas in *Super 'Aziza*. For Butler, what is being laughed at and imitated is the very notion of an original. This masquerade of performances is only possible, however, within a specific order – in this case the market place – which allows for certain gender performances and gender relations to elaborate and develop. *The Tough Guy* demonstrates that the 'original' masculine type is the result of power structures enabling someone to embody that particular type – as an example of its performativity – while *Super 'Aziza* comically portrays the contradictory nature of this embodiment.

5.2 The national hero

The following type, the hero, is very different from the previous contradictory *ma'allim*. A newly established state that had recently gained independence in 1952 needed heroes that depict the country's struggle for freedom. This is why the 'national hero' is an important character in post-independence films alongside the realist melodramas in which the *futuwwa* and *ma'allim* are positioned. The films were furthermore made in a context of euphoria over this newly acquired independence which resulted in depictions of strong, decisive men and women building the nation. Although I will focus on national male heroes, there are several films from this era that depict women as an essential part of the struggle for freedom and independence. Particularly Fatin Hamama and Lubna 'Abd al-'Aziz in their roles of women supporting the insurgents and independence fighters in the films *al-Bab al-Maftuh/The Open Door* (Henry Barakat 1963) and *Ana Hurra/I am Free* (Abu Sayf 1959) respectively. The first film was an adaptation of the novel by the female writer Latifa al-Zayyat, while the second film is an adaptation of the nationalist writer and journalist Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus' novel, both with the same titles.[23]

Images of national and Arab heroes in films were very common in the first decades of the republic, in addition to many historical films depicting a glorious Arab and Islamic past – fitting the government's Nasirist pan-Arab ideology.[24] In this part of the chapter I will describe a truly ideal representation of masculinity, portraying an image of leading, strong, decisive men. We can include many different films representing this group of men, such as glorified representations of historical figures, but also of legendary men and nationalist heroes in the wake of the struggle for independence. The men in these films all

23 The two films – as well as other films particularly with actress Fatin Hamama – developed a new narrative for women who play a vital role in the struggle for independence and in building the nation. Yet, this period is reminiscent of 'Abd al-Nasir's top-down state-feminism, rather than grass-roots feminism. This state-feminism entailed 'empowering' roles for women albeit more often in supportive positions (see also Bier 2011).
24 The most obvious example is Youssef Chahine's *Saladin the Victorious* from 1963.

have similar characteristics as sturdy, ideal men. Obviously heterosexual, they are not sexually active with the possible exception of the slightly romanticized Arab poet, 'Antar. They are all interested in the good of the country and romantic love is secondary. There is typically one girl they love, but her narrative is supportive for the sake of the greater goal of the nation. In the film I discuss here, the ideal hero is a young, revolutionary man, the war hero Ahmad in *Allah Ma'na/God With Us* (Ahmad Badrakhan 1955), fighting corruption in the late 1940s against the British and their local Egyptian puppet-rulers.

The movie's storyline is written by Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus and glorifies the fight for independence through subversion. 'Abd al-Quddus was a well-known political writer, which landed him in jail a couple of times *after* the Free Officers' coup (Bayyumi 2007). He was very critical about the establishment, before and after independence, but nevertheless received several awards for his writings, many of which were turned into films. *God With Us* tells the story of a shameful event for Egypt's army: the largest army of the region defeated by the army of the newly established state of Israel because of the fraudulent weapons the former had bought. 'Abd al-Quddus was the journalist of the weekly Ruz al-Yusif (established by his mother) who made the story known to the public; the figure of the journalist also appears in *God With Us*, played by the actor Shukri Sarhan.

5.2.1 God With Us

Director Ahmad Badrakhan (1909-1969) was one of the most well-known early film directors in Egypt, with a background in Egyptian theater. He contributed to the scenario of Fritz Kramp's *Lashin* (1938), and is famous for his multiple musicals with the singer Umm Kulthum. Together, they made three of her famous musicals, such as *Dananir* (1939), '*Ayda* (1942) and *Fatima* (1947). He was also hired as director of Umm Kulthum's first musical, *Widad* (1936), but after a quarrel with Studio Misr's director he was replaced by Fritz Kramp (Qasim 2010: 25). As a director he has worked with some of the giants of Egyptian cinema, like the actors Anwar Wagdi, Farid al-Atrash and 'Imad Hamdi, and the actresses Amina Rizq and Fatin Hamama. Also behind the scenes several famous scenarists assisted him (Badrakhan often wrote

the scenario of his films), like the playwright Badi' Khayri[25] and writer Yusif Gawhar.[26] Badrakhan also directed the nationalist film *Mustafa Kamil* (1952) about the revolution of 1919, an important film in the sense that it is part of a number of political films portraying a view on the world of national and international politics from an Egyptian point of view. Also in *God With Us*, Badrakhan – who had studied cinema in Europe – appropriates this essentially European technology to visualize Egypt's history.

This leads to a number of questions, not limited to what exactly the film portrays, but also how it *mediates* the construction of a national identity. What are its meaning producing elements, and how might they be read? How does the film employ these signifiers of a national identity, and to what end? Gauntlett (2008: 108) writes about the construction of a self-identity that "to believe in oneself, and command the respect of others, we need a strong narrative which can explain everything that has happened and in which, ideally, we play a heroic role." For this reason, the heroism of these films' men is a necessary aspect of their identities. But it also informs the construction of national Egyptian identities, as an ideal pitted against the foreign and colonial 'other'. Armbrust (1995: 118) notes that genre conventions in popular cinema are like a semantic field where the filmmaker and audience connect. For this reason, the film's use of conventional plot elements (e.g. the love story, the battle between good and evil, and foreign materialism) together with its extensive use of film techniques such as sound, lighting, camera angles and editing work to engage the audience with the narrative and to have them sympathize with the hero's fight.

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25 Badi' Khayri (1893-1966) is the scenarist of the famous musical and comedy *Ghazal al-Banat/Flirtation of Girls* (Anwar Wagdi 1949) with singer Layla Murad and comedian Nagib al-Rihani. I refer to Walter Armbrust (2000b) for an analysis of the historical importance of this film as a representative text of the social and cultural context in which it was produced.

26 Yusif Gawhar (1912-2001) has a long career as scenarist and playwright, spanning from the 40s well into the 90s (including several posthumous serials in the 2000s). Some of his most famous films are *Amir al-Intiqam/Prince of Revenge* (Henry Barakat 1950), based on the story of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, the 'noir'-film *al-Ragul al-Tani/The Second Man* ('Izz al-Din Dhu al-Fiqar 1959) and *al-Beh al-Bawwab/Mr. Doorman* (Hasan Ibrahim 1987).

Badrakhan is no stranger to heroic biopics as the director of *Mustafa Kamil* (1952). This film was produced before the '52 revolution, but subsequently banned by the censor and only allowed to screen after the military take-over. Joel Gordon (1997: 67) notes the film's attention to the hero's selfless battle, very similar to the later film *God With Us*. Both films portray a loving home (caring mothers, though absent fathers) and herald family life, love and marriage. But both films also undeniably portray the heroes as diligent and steadfast men, placing the greater goal of independence before their personal lives and interests.

The main characters in *God With Us* are played by famous actors, with each a very specific and distinct star persona. The somewhat melancholic looking 'Imad Hamdi (1909-1984) plays the hero in the film, next to the 'angel without wings', actress Fatin Hamama (1931-).[27] Mahmud Qasim (2004: 362) describes 'Imad Hamdy as someone with "calm features, resembling Marlon Brando, and with a characteristic voice". The audience knows him as *fatā al-shāsha al-awwal*, "the first boy of the white screen", because of his many romantic roles in the 50s, often next to the object of his romantic love, the actress Fatin Hamama. Hamdi was cast as a hero against all odds, with the romantic connotations his star persona possessed. But his calm features and his persona's determination, reason and wisdom are also reassuring for the ensuing narrative which is in need of a decisive, charismatic and experienced leader.

Hamdi is cast against the epitome of roguish evil in Egyptian films, the actor Mahmud al-Maligi (1910-1983). Al-Maligi was from a Kurdish family, born in one of Cairo's historical quarters, and started his acting career in Fatima Rushdi's theater troupe. Although the actor has also portrayed more agreeable characters like the rebel peasant in Youssef Chahine's *al-Ard/The Land* (1969), not to mention his contributions to theater, he remains mostly known for his performances as 'bad guy' next to his occasional counterpart, 'tough guy' Farid Shawqi. In *God*

27 Fatin Hamama was nicknamed *First Lady of the Arab Screen* (*Sayyidat al-Shāsha al-'Arabiyya*) for her performances of ideal women in many of her films. Her second nickname, as 'angel without wings' (*malāk bilā 'ajniḥa*) points at the often extremely tragic situations she finds herself in as aspects of the melodramatic mode of her films.

With Us, al-Maligi plays the role of the despicable weapons trader, held accountable for the death of thousands of Egyptian soldiers in the 1948 Palestine war. In his role as uncle of Hamdi's character Ahmad, he is thus also responsible for the latter's mutilation during the war. Al-Maligi's strict facial features and piercing eyes, and a voice that seems unable to convey any sort of compassion, make him the perfect character for his part in the film.

God With Us discusses the aftermath of the shameful event that led to Egypt's defeat in the 1948 war. What is conspicuously absent from the film, are the large student protests demanding that those responsible for the defeat are punished appropriately. Instead, the whole film is centered on the military hero's struggle against the establishment, in both society and the army. His struggle will turn personal, since his own uncle and father of the girl he loves is implicated in the illegal weapons deal with corrupted weapons that mutilated his body. It is common in Egyptian films to personalize national struggles and upheavals, being performed on the hero's or heroine's body and affecting their personal lives directly.

I have briefly mentioned the way in which foreigners and colonial rulers were portrayed as 'others',[28] which is one of the main elements in *God With Us*. They are distanced from the general populace, depicting them as completely dislocated from reality and from the people. Some of them do not speak Arabic fluently and live a lifestyle that is far removed from the average Egyptian's daily life. The effete rich attend parties, drink, mingle with women and dancers and squander their money on gambling. Intriguingly, one of the Egyptian dancers who moves around in these aristocratic circles has an essential

28 Edward Said defined *othering* in imperialist terms, specifically as an active politics applied by the colonizers to define the colonial/imperial occupier as 'Self' and the occupied population as 'Other', as weaker than the imperialist. Said uses it not only in a political context but rather in a cultural context as well, thus linking it to a politics of representation. Although here I use the term differently, it is actually the occupied who is represented as 'Self' while the occupier is *othered*, the goal is the same, namely to accentuate the need for – in the case of Egypt – independence and self-rule. This film is an example of how Egypt's film industry enables the construction of an image of 'self' and an Arab identity, and how it was able to use and adjust an initially 'Western' technology for its own profit.

role in the narrative, giving inside information to the press about the business deals the ruling class makes during their soirees. One of the most telling examples of this 'othering' is the way the king is depicted: he is absent. King Faruq is continuously filmed from the back, motioning his hand holding a big cigar and wearing several large rings. We do not hear his voice apart from the occasional "do as I told you", nor do we see his face. The king's advisors do not use the actual word "king", but rather refer to him (in colloquial Arabic) as "the big guy" (*al-rāgil al-kibīr*). The director makes a strong case for "depicting" the king this way in order to distance him from the audience.[29]

On the other hand, the hero's identity is constructed in masculine terms; he has a stable personality, he loves and cares for his mother as much as he does for his country, and he is a believer, but not a zealot. Ahmad did not yet hold a copy of the Quran, but received one from his mother "to protect him from all evil". Although his uncle is rich, it seems his father was a more 'honest' citizen and thus never amassed vast riches, leaving his mother widowed and poor, but with a strong belief in God's providence. It is too early to say that the hero's non-dogmatic religiosity is representative of the time or of the regime (as an army-officer, he clearly represents the officers who took hold of the country in '52), since 'Abd al-Nasir coopted religious institutions like al-Azhar under state influence from the 60s onward together with all facets of Egyptian society (Zeghal 1999: 371). Yet, the portrayal of popular manifestations of religiosity does point at a presupposed secularism of those working in the cinema industry. The film's portrayal of our hero in middle class terms, signal an ideal image of an Egyptian (male) citizen, contrary to the womanizing and pompous gamblers.[30] The film also does not shy away from depicting the army

29 In *Fi Baytina Ragul/A Man in Our House* (Henry Barakat 1961) only the king's hand is shown on a singular occasion. As the person in front of him addresses the unknown man as *mawlāna* (an official way of addressing the king) there is no doubt that it was the king who gave orders to quell the student protests from 1946, which the film takes as a starting point.

30 A similar depiction of the Arab hero is visible in Chahine's *Saladin*. Saladin introduces himself to the kings and dukes of Europe as "servant to God and the Arabs" which stands in stark contrast to the pompous behavior of the Franks who emphasize the largess of their properties and land.

soldiers and officers as 'average' Egyptians, embodied by the empoverished (yet coming from a rather rich family) Ahmad. His down-to-earth character and strong interest in the good of the country is juxtaposed to his uncle's corrupt and haughty character.

The most telling scene in which Ahmad appears to investigate his uncle – unknowing of the latter's implication in the arms deal – applies an interesting play of light and dialogue, juxtaposing shots of the two men to emphasize Ahmad's solid personality and his uncle's guilt. The film highlights both men's relationship when Ahmad enters his uncle's office without knocking, wearing his military outfit and standing next to his uncle who is sitting at his desk – underneath a picture of king Faruq – with a bright light on his face, interrogation-style. As soon as Ahmad enters, his uncle points a gun at the intruder, shouting quasi hysterically "Who's there?", to which Ahmad calmly replies "It's me, Ahmad, uncle." Then, Ahmad enters and stands next to his uncle's desk who is looking up to the imposing figure of Ahmad, emphasized through the bird-angle shot from behind Ahmad's left shoulder as a conspicuous reminder of his severed left arm. Expressive shadows play across al-Maligi's face and body from the light seeping through the blinds of his office's window. Significantly, he walks around his desk but stops right on time for the camera to frame Ahmad in the back and his uncle to the front addressing him with the king's picture right there in the middle. The men continue their loud discussion, in the semi-darkness of the room, until Nadia enters and switches on the light, abruptly ending the escalating dialogue.

Ahmad as investigator is thus ready to take on the establishment, maintained by the scene's careful placement of light and camera. The dialectic opposition between the two men is symbolically – and literally – solved when Nadia enters the room, pinpointing her future crucial role in Ahmad's quest. For most of the film, Nadia remains in the background, although her screen presence is essential to evoke emotional responses from the audience. She faces a dreadful dilemma: to help her country (and loved one), which means to betray her father. When she decides to steal the incriminating documents from her father's strongbox, the close-ups on her facial expressions and conspicuous body movements signal her difficulty with the situation;

she is obviously torn between these two men in her life. In the film's finale it turns out her help was unnecessary because her father is ironically killed by one of the corrupted hand grenades he had sold to the army.

Hamama's character plays an essential role in the melodramatic features of this film, through the continuous reverse shots and close-ups of her face which are supposed to affect the emotional reactions of the audience. It is her 'ordinariness' that instills meaning on her and the other characters' actions. Peter Brooks (1995: ix) remarks that melodrama "insists that the ordinary may be the place for the instauration of significance." Also the actress' ability to portray 'ordinariness' in her role as an ideal Egyptian woman, is an important part of her star performance. The early years after the revolution were characterized by a sharp increase in melodramatic realist films. Although *God With Us* is arguably neither as a blend of thriller and detective, it nevertheless applies expressive modes of both melodrama and realism recounting a fictive story based on historical events. This melodramatic realism in films often indicated a strong social criticism and an anchoring in common perceptions and discourse of their time, as well as a sort of sensationalism to touch the viewers' emotions and give them a sense of the significance and importance of the '52 coup and its effects on their daily lives.

5.3 Discussion

According to the new discourses and political situation in Egypt, several types of men turned out to be more 'popular' and attractive at the time which resulted in specific representational politics. The postcolonial state had to construct its image of a modern type of men, a truly Egyptian identity that is both local and located within wider colonial discourse, which we can see in the imagery of the national hero. Badrakhan's heroic army-officer is clearly distanced from the rather 'European' lifestyle of his antagonists, the pashas and – at their head – the king, who are depicted as immoral traitors. Egyptian cinema made a great effort to ensure that the average moviegoer would understand that the coup d'état was necessary and supported by

a great number of people, in order to label it a true people's revolution. That is why it applied an active politics of distancing the population from its previous leaders and enabling the audience to identify with more recognizable popular heroes.

The *ma'allim* represents the opposite of a hegemonic masculinity through his self-destructive nature and through the ridiculing of his preposterous masculinity. Depicting what is *not* desirable, the films herald heteronormative ideals for men to adhere to, namely marriage and respectful behavior towards women, while positioning men in naturalized roles of protectors and bearers of authority. Invested with a bourgeois modernist ideology, the film industry ridiculed the heavy-handed traditional and uneducated masculinity of the lower class *ma'allim*. Although the *ma'allim* has plenty of financial capital, it is obvious he prefers emotion to reason, being depicted as an uneducated brute in need of a proper 'punishment' (or education?). Abu Sayf's *The Tough Guy* is a fatalistic film which does not offer a viable solution at the end, while Radwan's *Super 'Aziza* most explicitly upholds middle class values like education and reason, and marriage based on love and companionship. But the latter film's dubious ending also implies a sort of nostalgia to a primitive violent masculinity.

Interestingly, both types of men, the hero and the 'villain', will return three decades later, albeit in a slightly adapted form. In chapter 7 we will see how features of the hero – his calm and calculated appearance, his decisiveness and selfless goals – are present in the 1980s anti-hero, while the 'villain' *ma'allim* will be more idealized in the character of the 'true' *futuwwa*. Ideal men have never really occupied the Arab screen, with notable exceptions to the rule, such as the films on the lives of Saladin and 'Antar. Men's masculinity is always somehow jeopardized, such as the disabled Ahmad in *God With Us* – or for example the suicidal national hero Ibrahim played by 'Umar al-Sharif in *Fi Baytina Ragul/A Man in Our House* (Henry Barakat 1961) – or the ridiculed muscularity of the *ma'allimīn*. Not even the educated, middle class ideal in *Super 'Aziza* is able to entirely uphold his principles and finally descends into the violent masculinity he so vehemently opposed for much of the film. Yet, the men's performances as selfless and responsible in the 'good versus evil' world

of popular melodrama instill notions of a mythical idealized masculinity we will not find in later films.

The films in this chapter are also portraying gendered images of progress (social, cultural, industrial), influenced by the dominant narratives emanating from the *Nahḍa*. Those narratives discussed new roles and ideals for both men and women (Elsadda 2007). Although the 50s do not belong to the historical period that defines the *Nahḍa*, its narratives and discourses did not just disappear and have influenced modern thinkers and writers for years to come. Similarly, the films discussed in this chapter are informed by these narratives, portraying what Armbrust called the 'codes of modernity' (Armbrust 1995), synthesizing local and global, classic and modern elements into a modern and positive portrayal of Egypt.

6. Defeated men in crisis and 'soft men' as the new norm

The end of the 60s was the start of a period with great upheavals. It was the end of an era and grand narratives – whether political, social or even academic – were withering, losing power to more diverse and less centralized discourses. The loss after the Six Day War in 1967 was larger than a military defeat. It entailed also the loss of a political ideology and a violent wake-up call for many in the Arab world who had grown up with the revolutionary slogans of their governments, their lies exposed. Also the film industry in Egypt – centralized, nationalized and riddled with high debts – was starting to feel the burden of the exacerbating financial and ideological crises in the country. Nouri Bouzid (1995: 244-5) observes that in the late 60s and early 70s new developments in filmmaking modes and practices were appearing, first in Egypt, later in other parts of the Arab world, away from melodrama towards a more realist cinematic mode. The point – according to him – of this new cinema was to create a conscience and take a more extreme, revolutionary, stance on society and more specifically those elements the filmmaker saw as problematic at that particular point in history.

A notion of crisis lies at the basis of the films produced after the war of 1967, and the crisis of man was one of the crises worked out in films of the 70s. This is not a unique development, also in other cinemas a male crisis was visualized in the 1970s. For example, Derek Nystrom (2009) shows in his study of class representations in 1970s Hollywood cinema the fascination of filmmakers with white working-class men and their "alleged [...] propensity for anti-social violence" (id.: x). With al-Sadat's politics of greater economic and social freedom, the Egyptian cinema industry of this era took advantage of this new-found cultural freedom to discuss topics like sexuality, the failure of Nasirism, the Six Day War of 1967 and the first signs of a critical stance

on the (previous) governments' modernist rhetoric.[1] Salah Abu Sayf's film *Hamam al-Malatili/Malatili Bath* (1973) explicitly depicts a gay character, spending his time in a public bathhouse drawing the patrons. Samir Sayf's film *Qitta 'Ala Nar/Cat on Fire* (1977) is even more explicit, with a gay hero, although too obvious references to the hero's sexuality are never made.[2] Not only male homosexuality, also women's (hetero)sexuality was explored, although not always in a positive manner. Shams al-Barudi and Nahid Sharif are two of the most famous sex symbols of 1970s cinema.

Political films critical about 'Abd al-Nasir's rule were forbidden at the start of the decade, Youssef Chahine's *al-'Asfur/The Sparrow* (1972) did not screen until two years after its production, and after the 'victory' of the October war in 1973 – a pivotal moment in Egypt in terms of politics, economy and cultural production. The 1970s – also the period of the introduction of color as the new standard in Egyptian cinema – were thus more than merely a commercial intermezzo between the Golden Age of public sector filmmaking in the 1960s and the revival of realism and the emergence of a new cinema style in the 1980s.[3] Walter Armbrust (1995: 103) argues that "the middle class modernist hero so common in earlier films has, since the 1970s, been either beleaguered or humiliated". Thus, the 70s are an essential turning point, setting the standards for the later developments of discourses of crisis in Egyptian films, evidenced by the 1980s and 90s lower class anti-heroes and the male middle class angst and threat of terrorism in the 2000s.

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1 It should be noted that any critical stance was only condoned when it was to discredit the Nasirist regime. The films from the first part of the decade were still shy, but as of 1973 and the 6 October war, more explicit and direct critique of 'Abd al-Nasir and the revolution was possible (Abu Shadi 1998: 21).
2 For a more detailed account on these and other films with gay characters, I refer to Garay Menicucci's article on homosexuality in Egyptian cinema.
3 According to Malkmus and Armes (1991: 56), the 1970s cinema industry in Egypt saw a decline in quality. Armbrust (1995: 104) furthermore notes that, according to some critics, the decline was due to commercialism, although he questions this short-sighted analysis and argues that the public sector – including the public sector film industry – had incurred huge debts by the 70s, resulting in a general economic crisis and thus leading to cheap film productions aimed at making easy earnings.

I have stressed the importance of the aftermath of the 1967 defeat with regard to Arab socialism on the political scene, and its effect on the masses from a social and cultural perspective. Samira Aghacy has extensively discussed the effects of the war on literature of the region in the decades following the 1967 war. She notes that "patriarchal constructions of masculinity in Arab societies become constrictions, disrupting man's quest for self-autonomy and creating contradictions for individual men" (Aghacy 2009: 4). These notions of ideal constructions of masculinity are equally problematic or unattainable for the defeated men in films of the 70s. The second prevailing type of men in this period is represented by a group of upper middle class men who were able to reposition men in their 'naturally' dominant positions through the use and abuse of what they perceive as commodities, namely women and money.

Class is an important signifier in films from this era, as the two different types of men show. The defeated men are all working- or middle class men, unable to live up to an ideal, aware about and feeling betrayed by the government propaganda. These defeated men represent the growing instability and uncertainty of men assumed to have a stable identity. On the other hand, the 'soft men' – posing as desirable and romantic – have adapted themselves to the new ideals of consumerism and materialism, occupying hegemonic positions as the new upper classes, the 'new money'. They associate themselves with a European lifestyle, educated and cultured but corrupted, abusive and patriarchal. These men enjoy the effects of patriarchy, here understood in terms of "institutionalized male control of female sexuality" (Hatem 1987: 818). As such, the masculine identity of these 'soft men' is closely intertwined with the women in the film, albeit negatively in terms of abuse of women simply because the personal status laws – mainly unchanged under 'Abd al-Nasir – allowed them to do so.

Some of the films discussed in this chapter are adaptations of novels, most notably by Nagib Mahfuz and Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus. The themes in Mahfuz' novels were increasingly critical about the achievements of the revolution with an ever more gloomy style. Many of these 60s novels were adapted to the screen, such as *al-Siman wa-l-*

Kharif/Autumn Quail (Husam al-Din Mustafa 1967), *Miramar* (Kamal al-Shaykh 1969), and *Tharthara Fawq al-Nil/Adrift on the Nile* (Husayn Kamal 1971). Also 'Abd al-Quddus' work was adapted for the screen, for example *al-Khayt al-Rafi'/The Fine Thread* (Henry Barakat 1971), and *Dammi wa-Dumu'i wa-Ibtisamati/My Blood, Tears and Smile* (Husayn Kamal 1973). In the first part of this chapter I will discuss films portraying defeated men. The main films under discussion are *al-Karnak/Karnak Café* ('Ali Badrakhan 1975), based on the novel with the same title by Nagib Mahfuz, and *Ughniyya 'Ala al-Mamarr/Song on the Mountain Pass* ('Ali 'Abd al-Khaliq 1972), an adaptation of a theater play by 'Ali Salim. In the second part of the chapter discussing the 'soft men' in hegemonic positions of power and domination, I discuss the films *My Blood, Tears and Smiles* and *Imra'a Sayyi'at al-Sum'a/A Woman With a Bad Reputation* (Henry Barakat 1973).

6.1 Defeated men

In 1972, Youssef Chahine made his famous film *The Sparrow*. The film had some difficulty with being screened and distributed because of its harsh criticism of the 'Abd al-Nasir-era. The film held government corruption responsible for the defeat, which is why the censor initially disapproved of it, fearing from a backlash from 'Abd al-Nasir supporters. One of the strongest images in the film that is of interest for this chapter on 'defeated men' was the moment when the though guy *ma'allim* heard the words of president 'Abd al-Nasir blare from the television set, resigning after the military defeat against Israel. That same *ma'allim* – never fearful or showing signs of weakness – burst out in tears and saw his world crumble down. Bouzid (quoted in Stollery 2001: 51-2) commented on this character as symbolizing the ultimate Arab hero, the 'he-man' who lost his entire identity and sense of being when he burst out in tears after the cataclysmic defeat against Israel. This portrayal of 'defeated men' was, as we will see, not uncommon in films from the late 60s and early 70s.

The era of great heroic men and women has ended and what we are left with are miserable reminders of a glorious past. But does this mean that men – or masculinity for that matter – are in crisis, or

purported to be in crisis? The point of this chapter is not to argue whether or not men are actually in crisis,[4] but rather how the notion of crisis is constructed and results in a "narrative pattern" (Haschemi Yekani 2011: 34) of certain men in crisis. This 'narrative pattern' which Haschemi Yekani describes, "signifies a recurring set of storylines or tropes that shape specific figurations of masculinity" (id. 34). In the context of the political crisis after 1967, and the discourses of social, economic and moral crises impendent on the country in the early 70s,[5] these patterns combined could create the notion of 'men in crisis'. The defeated men are examples of the 'crisis as male' (id. 15), a crisis that is perceived by men "from within" (Edwards 2006: 6). This internal crisis points at individual experiences *as men* and what it means for them to 'be' male. In the next paragraphs I will outline how certain films of this period contribute to this notion of 'men in crisis'. This contribution can be explicit through depicting men who experience specific forms of crises. It can also be implicit by portraying a certain type of masculinity as hegemonic, while portraying other types as an ideal, but in a marginalized rather than dominant position.

6.1.1 Song on the Mountain Pass

A film that focuses on the defeat of the 1967 war and its heavy toll on men particularly, is the 1972 film *Song on the Mountain Pass* ('Ali 'Abd al-Khaliq), based on the play by 'Ali Salim.[6] The choice of adapting a play

4 The notion of masculinity in crisis is difficult to assert, as Beynon (2002: 75) observes. Beynon asks to what extent the notion of crisis is an actual fact or the result of discursive practices across media and within a specific historical time and place.

5 For example, Sabrina Joseph (referring to Safia Mohsen) notes how media in Egypt showed a concern with an apparent 'new' phenomenon of middle class women participating in and being convicted for crimes such as prostitution, fraud, or smuggling (Joseph 2009: 84). Certain films of this period, for example *Adrift on the Nile* portrayed this concern vividly, with both married and unmarried women participating in extramarital sex and using drugs on the 'kingdom' that the houseboat represents in the film and in the book, although the novel is decidedly less moralistic in its treatment of the women's identity crisis.

6 'Ali Salim has recently come into disrepute after an opinion piece in the Egyptian newspaper *al-Masry al-Youm* (dated 30 May 2014) in which he called for a vigilante police force 'punishing' citizens who attacked – or are

to the screen was not a convenient choice, particularly considering the subject. The play was one of three one-act plays the writer 'Ali Salim wrote between '67 and '68 (Badawi 1987: 199). The plays touch upon topics like bureaucracy, war, and corruption and despotism (id. 199-201). The director of the film, 'Ali 'Abd al-Khaliq, has tried to incorporate these metanarratives into the film's plot, through the flashbacks and personal narratives of each of the five individuals. Each one is singled out to tell his story, his background and reasons to fight a war for his country. The play focused more on the personal loss and the atrocities of war, while the film's plot – through its flashbacks – dedicates itself to each of these men's narratives.

Director 'Ali 'Abd al-Khaliq (1944-) has studied at the national Film Institute in Giza, founded in the early 60s as part of the government's interest in the film industry and after its nationalizations of industries across the country. He was also part of the *Jamā'at al-Sīnimā al-Jadīda*, the *New Cinema Group* which vied for more activist movies. He directed some of the most famous films of the 1980s, particularly the films *al-'Ar/Disgrace* (1982) and *al-Kef/Mood* (1985), both film about drug abuse and trading, which were well-received critically and also did well at the box-office. *Song on the Mountain Pass* is the director's debut and starred famous and upcoming actors alike, such as Mahmud Mursi (1923-2004), Salah Qabil (1937-1992) and Mahmud Yasin (1941-).

Mahmud Mursi often portrayed gloomy men, as well as fiercely patriarchal men, in films from the 1960s. Ahmad Ramzi (1997: 271) describes his diverse characters as such: "he sometimes looks like a dream, or like a horrible nightmare". He is the patriarch defending bourgeois values and norms in *al-Bab al-Maftuh/The Open Door* (Henry Barakat 1963) against the freedom that the female protagonist tries to achieve for herself. He is also the victim-hero[7] in *Autumn Quail*, playing

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presumed to attack – the police. He refers to the French *Honneur de la Police* vigilantes who orchestrated a series of attacks in the late 70s to defend his claim.

7 Victim-heroes are common also in other film industries, and I refer to Judith Franco (2008) about the redemption of white masculinity in European and American arthouse films. Through the films' narrative and form white masculinity is put in crisis and finally reimposed as the only viable option. A similar argument is made by Erica Arthur (2004) in her essay about *American*

a government official who was removed from his post after the 1952 coup and who was unable to cope with the dire social and economic consequences it had for his social class after being charged for corruption. He also plays the domineering patriarch in *Zawjati wa-l-Kalb/My Wife and the Dog* (Sa'id Marzuq 1971), boasting about his sexual activity, but fearful of his own wife's sexuality although she had never given him any reason to doubt her. Not exactly a 'star', he played character-rich types as diverse as violent brutes as well as caring father-figures.

Mursi shares the screen with the upcoming star actor Mahmud Yasin who will also return in the films with 'soft men', espousing his romantic, yet conservative masculinity. Yasin's clean shaven, puppy-eyed and tanned, attractive face forestalls a kind and sweet personality, yet his masculine identity is constructed around rather conservative notions of male domination over women. He usually portrays idealist men, though often his characters turn out rather conformist at the end of his films. Yasin's portrayal of a conservative masculinity is partly due to the romances he is most famous for, including *The Fine Thread* (Henry Barakat 1971) and *Ayna 'Aqli?/Where's My Mind?* ('Atif Salim 1974). His characters often portray an internal ambiguity, compromised by his surroundings and his beliefs, thus a perfect example of a man in crisis.

The other actors in the film are not major star-actors, usually playing supporting roles in films. Nevertheless, each one of them took on a specific role in *Song on the Mountain Pass*, and their performances vary according to the character and the message the director tried to communicate. Each character represented a different stratum of society, from peasants to musicians, signaling a clash between individual aspirations and authoritarian regimes in this period (El-Enany 1993: 101). In this and other films of the 70s we can notice a growing disgruntlement with the authoritarian implementation of the so-called goals of the revolution. All of the male characters in this film have in one way or another been let down by a regime that was unable

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Beauty (Sam Mendes 1999). Victimhood is used as well to redeem the main character's transgressive behavior in his quest to impose his dominant position as a man.

to manage its own revolutionary propaganda. Particularly the character played by Salah Qabil, Munir, is a good example of one man unable to attain the hegemonic ideal masculinity that the bourgeois middle classes upheld. This actor's masculine features allow him to convincingly perform this hegemonic masculinity, although, as an audience, we are aware of the lie behind the performance. I will return to this character later in the analysis of the film.

Through a series of flashbacks the film displays the lives of five soldiers left alone after the June defeat in 1967. The film opens with a similar eeriness as in *al-Mumya'/The Mummy* (Shadi 'Abd al-Salam, 1969, 1975): the sound of wind blowing over a desolate area, signaling a sense of loss and displacement.[8] It could be any desert, but a title informs the audience what day it is and, as a consequence, what place we are in: the Sinai desert on June 7 of 1967. The soundtrack of the film plays an important role as well, since there is basically no extra-diegetic sound, except for the title song written by the Egyptian poet 'Abd al-Rahman al-Abnudi[9] and for the occasional soundtrack during the flashbacks to set the mood. The film's title song, *Ti'īshi ya Ḍiḥkit Maṣr* [Egypt's Smile, May You Live On], references the many hardships the country and more specifically its people, suffer – from foreign occupation or internal corruption and abuse. While at the start of the film its melody evokes a sense of loss and desperation, by the end of the film it signals a faintly sparkling hope.

8 *The Mummy* is a critically acclaimed film, made with state support. Contrary to common depictions of Europeans or foreigners in Egyptian films, Walter Armbrust claims, this film shows the "conceptual equivalence of Egyptian modernity and European science" (Armbrust 1995: 99) in its first scenes where the European Maspero explains the need to stop grave robbers in the south of the country from illegally selling Egypt's national historical artifacts. But the film also portrays a modernist class ideal: the educated Cairene effendi heads southwards to stop the 'ignorant' grave robbers – although for them it has always been a source of living.

9 'Abd al-Rahman al-Abnudi is a famous Egyptian poet using colloquial Egyptian Arabic instead of the 'higher' variant, standard Arabic. His poetry often talks about the underprivileged and oppressed. He is also known for his oral performances of the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, the story about the Hilal-tribe in Northern Africa (see also chapter 5).

Song on the Mountain Pass tries to answer several questions in the course of the film, first and foremost the question of 'self' and a sense of identity for men as the pillars upholding the country. For what does it mean to be an Egyptian, or an Egyptian man for that matter? What are men's roles in society, as farmers, students, artists, workers? These are questions that most of the men struggle with in this film. The only one who seemed happy with his future, is the worker Mus'ad (played by Salah al-Sa'dani) who is planning to settle down and get married. His only hope is to make it back alive so he can be with his fiancée. His flashbacks are also the most vibrant and romantic of all, including a romantic soundtrack playing in the back. Mus'ad's story is one of hope, which is then violently annihilated by the war.

The film's soundtrack emphasizes the importance of the title track and other songs written by al-Abnudi, but it also contributes to the raw realism the picture exposes. This is a time of war and no frivolities are necessary to recount one of the most devastating events in postcolonial Egyptian history. The camera's eye is only interested in the lives of these men, their personal backgrounds as well as the way they deal individually with the current situation. The plot does not allow for any digressions, only the bare information needed to understand their personal struggles. The scenes in the Sinai desert are therefore nihilist, focusing on the men's camaraderie in times of war, a time when masculine characteristics like bravery, strength and determination are necessary. The stark opposition between these men's reality and their dreamy flashbacks bolsters their yearning for change.

The individual flashbacks in the film point to these issues, as each of the men in the film is struggling to come to terms with the role they are assumed to play *as men*. Only one of the men, Muhammad (played by Mahmud Mursi), joined the army as volunteer and he is convinced of his role as a soldier. Muhammad is a farmer from rural Egypt who is recruited to fight in the 1956 war and is ordered to leave his land. The images of men dying in the field convinced him to stay in the army and fight for his country; he feels this is where he was needed most at the time. He represents the older generation, those who grew up under a colonial regime and felt the positive results of the revolution

personally through the land divisions after independence. The other men were still too young to experience the revolution, although they have lived through its aftermath. Each of them has his own personal narrative, to 'fit in' (Mus'ad), to object (both Hamdi, played by Ahmad Mar'i, and Shawqi, played by Mahmud Yasin), or to abuse the system's excesses to his own profit (Munir, played by Salah Qabil). Needless to say, the two men who objected to what 'society' expected from them were also shunned by everyone around them.

Hamdi was in real life a talented musician, but his talent was not respected by the music industry which led him to leave it all behind him. Hamdi experiences a personal crisis and looks for his role as an artist which he seems to find one night passing by a group of masculine, bare-chested tramline workers. He finds real art, stripped of its unnecessary embellishments, in the songs they sing or in the movements and noises they make with their bodies, shovels and tools. The film thus signals a return to the basic elements of life in which one may find beauty, without its hypocritical adornments, coded as feminine as opposed to the masculine rawness the workers expose. The film also seems to hint at a return to a 'pure' type of masculinity, the one of muscular men, building their modern country: they are the worker-heroes whose protests and objections were violently crushed under the rule of 'Abd al-Nasir.[10] They are furthermore working on tram lines in the modern part of Cairo built in the 19th century. It is an image of Egypt as a modern nation that is visible in films from as early as the pioneer films produced in the country. Ifdal Elsaket (n.d.) notes the politics of these modernist images in pre-1952 films, portraying a national image of Egypt as an industrialized country, modern and progressive. In Hamdi's flashback, where decadence and a general disinterest in traditional culture reign, this emphasis on the workers' traditional, a cappella song while working on a mechanic component only made possible through industrialization, is an indication of the

10 The protests of the 1960s in al-Mahalla are an example in this regard, considering they were also referenced to in the other film *Karnak Café* when the students were arrested again and accused of inciting the workers there with 'communist ideologies'. Also in the past decade and particularly since the mass protests and strikes of 2006 and 2008 this city has played a major role in the protests that led to the ouster of former president Mubarak.

director's leftist modernist ideology of progress and his social realist style.

Shawqi for his part was an intelligent art student who rejected the university's uncritical stance towards knowledge and questioning what we know, resulting in clashes with his professors one year after the other. Shawqi is as such explicitly defined as a failure by his father and his fiancée. The flashback's use of zooming in and out is a bit dramatic, but certainly brings the message across. The use of this fast zooming is common in Egyptian television serials, but much less so in films. By zooming in or out so vehemently in the flashbacks, the director tries to unsettle his audience and emphasize the actor's mental instability and intellectual distance from the society in which he lives. Shawqi only feels he has become a man again when he went off to war to fight for his country. He is apparently very adept in shooting missiles at tanks, which makes his comrades very appreciative of his work – in stark contrast to his father and fiancée. As a victim of a society that has succumbed to sheer consumerism and lacks an ideological direction, he is in search of his identity as a man, just like the musician Hamdi and the others.

Munir is perhaps the most interesting character of them all, lying about his background but also representing all that could go wrong in a country that espouses socialism, but does not act on it. Munir comes from a poor family in a popular neighborhood, is not very bright and without opportunities in what he assumes to be (and media purport to be) the 'normal' world. He has a lot of ambition which he can only accomplish by going astray. He does this by exploiting women and pretending to live a life that is not his.

The director's take on Munir's flashback is significant in this regard. Munir tells one thing to his comrades through a voice-over, while the audience is allowed a sneak-view into his 'real' world of criminality and prostitution. He calls himself *namūḏag al-shābb al-nāgiḥ* [exemplar of a successful youngster], considering that he is the only one who 'made it' financially. As such, the director shows us exactly what society expects of men: study well, be obedient, find a 'decent' job, get married and start a family, or: provide, protect and procreate (Gilmore 1990). Munir's masquerade of hegemonic masculinity

interpreted as a heteronormative ideal, shows the effects of this restrictive ideal on 'real' men and their actual, lived, experiences. The role strain they all experience and which Munir so convincingly hides is a way for the director to portray the problematic burden of this idealized type of masculinity for the men in his film. The question now is whether the film criticizes this ideal, or whether it only critiques the inability, for various reasons, to attain it while still adhering to some sort of masculine ideal. This question will be answered in the following paragraphs.

One element constantly recurs in the film, namely that the war they are fighting is a way for them to regain their masculinity, their identity as Egyptians and as men. Shawqi is literally described a failure and Munir – although presenting himself as a success story – is an example of yet another failure. Hamdi longs nostalgically for a masculine ideal of strength, while Muhammad has endured the hardships of war and as such is strengthened and encouraged to lead the other men and protect their country. Mus'ad is the simple delta-kid who has not yet come into contact with the hardships of life, dozing off in his romantic memories of him and his fiancée, stealing kisses in a back alley in Damietta, the city where they live. Muhammad the farmer left behind more than just his land and family, symbolized by the lonely shovel in the field, he left behind his whole sense of being, his identity, when he decided to join the army to fight against the tripartite aggression in 1956. Instead, he went looking for a new masculine identity, a masculinity which allowed him to continue using his strength, but this time to protect his family/country rather than provide for it.

If we read these men's masculine performances in the context of Trujillo's (1991) analysis of what defines hegemonic masculinity in American popular culture, we can discern several similarities. According to Trujillo, hegemonic men are required to be physically strong (Hamdi's enamored look upon the bare-chested workers), achieve professionally (Shawqi's failure), and be familial patriarchs (Muhammad's reality and Mus'ad's future). Another requirement is present in Muhammad, namely being an 'outdoorsman', which Muhammad certainly is as a farmer but also in terms of his

experiences as soldier where he found his goal in life and his true self. The hegemonic ideal – unattainable for all – is what Munir performs, or at least, pretends to perform, parodying hegemonic masculinity as defined by him and his surroundings and exposing it as a complex construct that men are supposed to identify with. Thus, while critical of a hegemonic ideal for men, the film nevertheless does not give up on a masculine ideal defined by men being able to be in touch with their inner selves, with nature and with their direct surroundings. Further, the film considers work and education as integral parts to the construction of a masculine identity, although the current (in the film) conditions are not accommodating enough for men to adequately perform, resulting in a so-called crisis of men. In the next film, *Karnak Café*, we will see how this abstract notion of crisis affects the male body.

6.1.2 Karnak Café

The second film portraying defeated men is the adaptation of Nagib Mahfuz's novel with the same title: *Karnak Café* ('Ali Badrakhan, 1975). 'Ali Badrakhan (1946-) is the son of the famous pioneer of Egyptian cinema, Ahmad Badrakhan, and has himself made fame with several critically and popularly acclaimed films, like *Shafiqa wa-Mitwalli/Shafika and Metwalli* (1978) and *al-Go'/Hunger* (1986), both starring the director's wife, Su'ad Husni, who also participates in *Karnak Café*. Upon completing his film studies in Cairo, he continued studying for another two years in Italy. After his return to Egypt, he was assistant-director to both his father and director Youssef Chahine, for example for the latter's *The Sparrow*. Badrakhan's *Karnak Café* was a box office success and was the start of a series of films criticizing the July revolution's outcomes (Abu Shadi 1998: 21).

The main actor in the film, Nur al-Sharif (1946-), was a rising star in the 70s, often playing roles of underdog men. His younger characters in films were also often subjected to violence – both physical and psychological – as is explicitly the case in *Karnak Café*. Nur al-Sharif was initially a football player for Zamalek, according to Mahmud Qasim (2004: 579). He showed his football talent in the film *Cat on Fire*, playing the role of a gay football star. Nur al-Sharif studied theater and

started acting in plays, after which Adil Imam introduced him to director Hasan al-Imam. His great performance in the latter's film *Qasr al-Shoq/Palace of Desire* (1969) meant the start of his film career. Al-Sharif started out as the underdog anti-hero, convincingly thanks to his short physique. Slowly his characters developed towards more 'adult' men, portraying patriarchs in films and serials alike. One of his most famous recent parts is as the patriarch Sa'd al-Dali in the popular Ramadan-serial *al-Dali*, or as the shoe-polisher turned rich car trader in *The Yaqoubian Building*.

The film *Karnak Café* is filled with great names from Egyptian cinema. Nur al-Sharif plays alongside the popular actress Su'ad Husni (1943-2001)[11] and other famous star actors. One of them is Kamal al-Shinawi (1921-2011) in his role as horrid secret service director. Although he often played romantic roles in his younger years,[12] later he played roles of corrupt officials. Farid Shawqi in his role as Zaynab's/Su'ad Husni's father, has grown old and lost his dominant position, while the former belly dancer Tahiyya Carioca (1919-1999) keeps up her role as tough, 'baladi' woman in the role of Zaynab's mother. Muhammad Subhi (1948-) plays the revolutionary Hilmi, in love with the elder café-owner Qurunfila, played by the beautiful, although nostalgic, Shuwaykar (1935-). The film boasts an impressive cast, and many more famous actors make an appearance, but for the analysis of the film's portrayal of a 'defeated man', it suffices to focus on Isma'il, the character played by Nur al-Sharif.

Produced after the 1973 war, the film is allowed visual criticism and a condemnation of the human rights' abuses during 'Abd al-Nasir's rule.[13] The main character in this film is Isma'il who, while taking his

11 Su'ad Husni was not only famous as an actress; she was also often seen dancing and singing in her films. She is still revered for her songs up to this day, as well as for her more realistic portrayal of women in films. Her star persona is very different from the idealistic 'first lady', Fatin Hamama, or other contemporaries to the latter. Instead, Husni is a little daredevil, though usually conforming to 'proper' female behavior in terms of her sexual activity.

12 A famous film in which he plays a cute swindler is the 1951 romantic comedy *Master Bulbul* (see also chapters 5 and 9).

13 Because of its explicit images regarding human rights abuses in 'Abd al-Nasir's prisons and police apparatus, the film was strongly criticized and at

daily nap in the café, hears on the radio about the 1973 war and the Egyptian army's crossing of the Suez Canal. As a doctor he suddenly realizes he can help. As a man, he feels empowered and encouraged once again. His appearance does not give away his potential, either as a doctor or as a man: he looks forlorn, the miserable reminder of a once promising future. When he arrives at one hospital, he is denied entry unless he has a permit issued by the hospital's director. He recognizes his friend and former fiancée Zaynab working as a nurse, who will try to put in a good word for him with the director. The rest of the movie is a visualization of Zaynab's story to the hospital's director about what turned Isma'il into the present failure. Zaynab is telling the events that happened to Isma'il and their friends Hilmi and Qurunfila, as part of the larger narrative, the 1973 war. This also has consequences for the way Isma'il's masculine performance is portrayed; it is Zaynab's recounting these events that made him into the miserable man he is now.

The men in this film are diverse and on more than one occasion the film turns to the issue of a generational clash rather than simply depicting the regime's repressive methods. On the one hand there is the young generation, like Isma'il and his friends from university; on the other hand there is the group of elder educated men who sit at the Karnak café liberally discussing politics and the role of art in society. While these young men and women, as "children of the revolution" (Mahfuz 2011: 69), are portrayed full of activity and ambition, the elder men are miserable and feeble remnants – therefore they are never arrested; these elder intellectuals' words pose no threat to the regime. Another important space in the film, apart from the café, is the local popular neighborhood (the *ḥāra*) where both Isma'il and Zaynab live. Within the *ḥāra* are a few recognizable male characters, namely *ma'allim* Hasaballah (played by 'Ali al-Sharif)[14] with his enormous and

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first denied screening permits. The pending censorship contributed greatly to the ticket sales of the film (Gordon 2002: 239).

14 'Ali al-Sharif, regularly portraying traditionalist characters because of his appearance and rough voice, was convicted in the 1960s of being a member of a communist party, which makes his personal relation to this film particularly tangible. He was the actor who played the crying 'he-man' in Chahine's *The Sparrow*.

old-fashioned mustache, large, round face, deep voice and broad, muscular chest, and Zaynab's father Diab. Both men are representative of what Milestone and Meyer labeled "old men" (2012: 114), not in the sense of age, but in the sense of the type of masculinity they represent, as uneducated 'brutes'. Their bodies and appearances – as well as the audience's cultural knowledge attributed to actors like Farid Shawqi and 'Ali al-Sharif – are the main markers of their masculine identities: their masculinity 'emanates' from their bodies, as it were, as we have seen with the muscular performances of the *ma'allim* in the previous chapter.

The all-mighty Diab in this era can still pretend to be the provider and protector of his family, but not in the face of the authoritarian regime which has since long taken up – or perhaps always kept – the role of 'father'-figure entitled to the use of violence. Swedenburg called this the "Daddy State" (2007: 5-6), where the state seems to have taken on the role of providing (and punishing) father. The paternalist goal of the 'Daddy State' is to guide youngsters into becoming proper national subjects. Stollery (2001) compares the authoritarian state to patriarchal constructions of the 'family', with a male provider – the head of state – entitled to violence to keep order in the family. His argument reflects Samira Aghacy's argument of an intricate connection between representations of state and family in Arabic novels since 1967 (Aghacy 2009: 118-9). Within cinema, portrayals of such authoritarian figures are not necessarily limited to men alone. Women, too, can embody authority, as protectors of a patriarchal system. The depiction of the state in *Karnak Café* is, however, as a father *failing* to provide or protect, while imposing itself through violence and coercion. More specifically, the Nasirist myth is now held entirely responsible for the defeat, its violence as evidence of its failing ideology and policies.

In the film – as well as the book – the group of students Isma'il and Zaynab are part of, is arrested three times on trumped-up charges. The film's narrative centers on the character of Isma'il and the love story that ensues between him and Zaynab. A secondary love story in the plot is between the activist Hilmi and Qurunfila. The film portrays the youthful revolutionary spirit in the students that is crushed by the

state's repressive politics and authoritarianism. The plot develops as a coming-of-age story, where the young men and woman try to disentangle themselves from the authoritarian state-as-father, embodied by the head of the university and the head of the secret services, Khalid Safwan. The young people's own fathers are impaired old men: Hilmi's father is a retired teacher, Zaynab's father is a lower class man who has no real 'power' when he faces state institutions.

In the film, the young men are also directly impaired by an abstract, corrupt, authoritarian state apparatus, in this case embodied by Khalid Safwan. Isma'il, after his release from prison the third time and coerced by Khalid Safwan to work as an informer, is not able to continue his life in normalcy. Samira Aghacy's analysis of novels shows that "[t]he strategy of coercion, intimidation, and torture is part of the state-controlled machinery and security apparatus [...] which aims at producing submissive individuals" (Aghacy 2009: 94-5). But, contrary to Aghacy's analysis of novels that turn prison time into a *rite of passage* constructing a man's identity (id.), the patriarchal 'state apparatus'[15] in this film has entirely different effects on men. While the young men in the film seem defiant, particularly Hilmi who eventually pays the price for his defiance, the main character Isma'il is a broken, defeated, man at the end. The most powerful image of the 'defeated man' that Isma'il has become is portrayed in his inability to perform sexually with Zaynab, reliving his memories from prison.[16] His

15 The prison is not the only apparatus that is critically approached in the film. Also, and foremostly, the educational system is critiqued for its refusal to bolster critical thought. Instead, the university appears to be the first place where students run the risk of encountering the repressive state, while Hilmi's father was forced to retire from his teaching position. The regime is thus shown to extend its influence not only through 'correctional' institutions like prison (which are actually considered as a place to cure citizens of their anti-regime thoughts), but also through schooling. Although absent in this film, also religion has been coopted by the state through its greater influence on both the Islamic and Christian establishments, a critique that is also directed at the current leadership in Egypt.

16 Film critic Kamal Ramzi (2012) reads this scene entirely differently, saying that Isma'il realizes that Zaynab is no longer a virgin after her rape by one of the secret service agents. Ramzi reads the images of people getting arrested and human rights abuses as images flashing before *her* eyes, reminding the audience in the first place of the *reason* why she would give herself to Isma'il

time in prison has made him into what he is now, and places him in the position of a victim of the state's ultimate betrayal, represented through Zaynab's rape or Hilmi's death.

The film suggests here a 'crisis from without, as well as from within' experienced by the men (Edwards 2006: 6-7). Edwards relates the notion of 'crisis from without' to a perception of men's positions within institutions such as work, education and the family. The crisis ensues when men compare their actual experience to those positions they deem appropriate within each of these institutions. The 'crisis from within' is far less easily discernable, since it relates to how men perceive their roles have shifted *as* men. In the film, these crises take place on the level of the state, namely in the university, which is the place where they – as students – are confronted for the first time with the state's curtailing of personal rights. As the film progresses, Isma'il's confrontations with the state – whether in university or with the secret service represented by Khalid Safwan – turn this external crisis into a personal crisis of his male identity. In order for Isma'il to forget what has happened, he needs an external instigator to take his life in his own hands. That abstract notion-turned-personal is the 1973 war and particularly the images of soldiers crossing the Suez Canal on October 6. The film's ending is patriotic and glorifies the army's accomplishments, to the point that it is patronizing in its semi-happy ending. The fact remains that society's woes have a direct impact on Isma'il's life: he is unable to cope with a defeat that was much larger than simply a lost battle, resulting in erratic and 'unmasculine' behavior.

The lower class rough masculinity of the two *ma'allimīn* stands in stark contrast to Isma'il's character, represented as a 'defeated' ideal as the medical student he is. They both radiate masculinity, something which Isma'il lacks entirely at the beginning of the film, yet which is also expected of him. Connell (2005: 45) states that masculinity is somehow always thought "to be inherent in a male body or to express

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before marriage: she is no longer a virgin anyway. I do not believe this is a correct reading, considering some of the images are personal memories of what happened to Isma'il in prison. I find Ramzi's inability to grasp Isma'il's mental breakdown striking, instead the critic insists on his own presumptions about marriage which do not seem to apply here.

something about a male body." Isma'il's inability to perform masculinity on screen is coded as undesirable behavior. Depictions of men's bodies are visibly different in this film compared to older films in an Egyptian cinema tradition. The lower class men perform their masculinity successfully within the *ḥāra* but they are contained once they venture outside of it. The old men at the café are unthreatening, while the tortured bodies of Isma'il and his friends are an example of curbing their youthful enthusiasm into socially accepted behavior and to marginalize their activism.

The contradictory figure of Khalid Safwan is at once a dandy, a rich, well-dressed man, residing in a villa with swimming pool, exacerbating the unequal class relations between him and his 'victims'. But he is also the regime's tool of coercion, effectively smashing people's middle class dreams. Armbrust (1995) notes that as of the 1970s, "the sort of middle class modernist hero so common in earlier films has [...] been either beleaguered or humiliated". The students – Isma'il and Zaynab are from lower class backgrounds and Hilmi is the son of a schoolteacher – aspire a middle class lifestyle, going to university and studying for a better future. Zaynab's parents had subscribed to a government program to relocate them to the new concrete blocks built during 'Abd al-Nasir's reign – still considered a step up the social ladder compared to their current dwellings. But the students' dreams and aspirations are crushed by the regime. The modernist and bourgeois ideal they aspire – and which is still portrayed as an ideal – is no longer as attainable as it used to be in 50s and 60s films. But, while Zaynab was able to put her past behind her by moving out of the lower class neighborhood into a new, 'modern' area, Isma'il was not able to do so until – as the film suggests – his masculine identity is restored through the 'victory' of passing the Suez Canal by Egyptian troops in 1973.

The protagonists of the films discussed in this chapter are all indicative of the defeated men that Bouzid (ref. in Stollery 2001: 51) talked about and saw embodied by the tough 'he-man' in Youssef Chahine's film *The Sparrow*. These men feel the crisis from without creeping in on their identities as well. Their masculinity as performed

in the films is an ambiguous one, in a way reminding us of the pre-1967 male ideal as provider and protector, but the ideal has been tarnished, difficult, if not impossible, to attain. The blame is put entirely with the regime's inability to achieve the goals of the 1952 revolution (Abu Shadi 1998: 21), which eventually would culminate in the 1967 defeat.

The performance of the men in these films is always dependent on their ability to perform successfully and heroically, to perform, in other words, masculinity because of the fact that they have, simply put, a body coded as male (Connell 2005: 45). The 1967 defeat was for these cinematic men (but also for women) a mental defeat, apart from the real and physical defeat of the Arab armies. In the political and social crisis of the 70s, men were depicted as unable to perform according to those ideals prevalent in earlier films and media. The defeat was also a violent wake-up call from the myth they had been living (El-Enany 1993: 116-7). Yet, in the following part of the chapter, we will see that the crisis that some men experience in films depicting the depressive mood after the defeat, is not at all a crisis for certain other men in films addressing the consumerism that had become – in the eyes of the filmmakers – detrimental to the goals of the revolution.

6.2 'Soft men' in the picture

The type discussed in this part of the chapter is a type that is still prevalent today and perhaps has never disappeared altogether. These men generally present themselves as being open-minded, skilled, educated, and 'westernized',[17] but there is one serious flaw: they are exactly the opposite, apart from, perhaps, being 'westernized'. This type assumes that they are entitled to a sort of regulatory behavior over women and women's bodies as well as other (marginalized, subverted) men. Thanks to their financial success, achieved through the subjugation of others, this type has successfully gained control of the consumerist, feminized society in which some men felt lost. As

17 'Westernized' is depicted here as going to parties, drinking alcohol, entertaining superficial human interactions and traveling wide and far across the globe for work or leisure.

such, they set a new norm, a new ideal, of what it means to be a man. And all this fits perfectly and contradictorily within their concept of a cultured and Western bourgeois lifestyle.

I will consider films that depict financially successful men living the life of the 'cultured' male. There are a few elements they all have in common: financial security, education, sexual activity and heterosexuality, and – most of them – living a 'Western' lifestyle. The films I will discuss here are *Woman With a Bad Reputation* (Henry Barakat 1973), and *My Blood, Tears, and Smile* (Husayn Kamal 1973). Both films are actually with a female protagonist. This, however, makes for an interesting female point of view – although the camera's gaze is coded as male, the women are in no way 'passive' – on the men and their masculine performance defining her life. There are many more films portraying similar plot lines about the contradictory 'nature' of certain educated, westernized men. One such film is Tolba Radwan's *Qissa Mamnu'a/A Forbidden Story* (1963), in which the Cairene uncle of a peasant girl lives his libertine lifestyle, but all the while enforces strict social control on the girl's whereabouts. Another film is *Where Is My Mind?* ('Atif Salim 1974), which seeks to discuss the combination of strongly rooted traditions with a 'modern' European lifestyle. Another film, with a plot line very similar to *Woman With a Bad Reputation*, namely *The Fine Thread*, was also directed by Henry Barakat (1971). All these films have, however, two important elements in common: the subjugation of women, and men re-appropriating their dominant position in society through combining contradictory elements in their identities.

Made in the 70s, the period that showed the initial distrust in the Nasirist state's modernist rhetoric of individualism, education, and constructing the 'modern' Egyptian citizen, these films are also testimonies of their time. In the changing Egypt of the 1970s, moving away from socialism towards a more aggressive form of capitalism, women's presence and role in public was starting to change as well. Women were also more public because of the Nasirist state feminism encouraging women to study and work (although mostly in government positions).[18] The combination of these changing social

18 Mervat Hatem (1988: 413) reminds of the incredible increase in the number

conditions and representational practices in popular mass media in the 70s resulted in this ambiguous masculine ideal. The question remains, however, how much the directors contributed to or opposed the idea of men reappropriating their dominant positions.

6.2.1 Woman With a Bad Reputation

Henry Barakat (1914-1997), famous for his many romantic musicals, comedies, as well as his melodramatic realism, is a venerated director in Egypt.[19] He entered the film industry as an editor while he was still studying Law. His career covered an extensive period, debuting as a director in 1942 with *al-Muttahima/The Accused*, continuing into the 1990s. He not only directed his films, but also often wrote the scenario and produced several of his own films. He worked closely together with one of the female pioneers of Egyptian cinema, Asya Daghir, who produced many of his films, such as the epic *Amir al-Intiqam/Prince of Revenge* (1950) which is based on Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo*. He furthermore worked often with Fatin Hamama in his melodrama's critiquing society's double standards when it comes to women and women's behavior, as well as critiquing the abuse of women's bodies, e.g. in *al-Haram/The Sin* from 1965. Through narrative techniques and the camera's eye, the director privileges the victimized woman's point of view, particularly so with the actress Fatin Hamama.

The current film, *Woman With a Bad Reputation* stars actress Shams al-Barudi (1940-).[20] In her younger years she often played roles of sexually active women. She is famous in Egypt and the Arab world as a sex symbol, not afraid to pose in sexually suggestive ways. Whoever

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of educated women between 1960 and 1976, particularly the sixfold increase of women pursuing a higher education.

19 Several of his films are on the list of 'best Egyptian films' compiled by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in 2006, such as *Du'a' al-Karawan/Call of the Curlew* (1959), an adaptation of the homonymous novel by Taha Husayn.

20 Actually, the script writer Mamduh al-Lithi was criticized for having taken the plot from Ihsan Abd al-Quddus' novel *My Blood, Tears and Smile* which was screened the previous season, before *Woman* (al-Akhbar 11.01.1974). Al-Lithi rebuked that he had already finished the script years earlier but was stopped by the censor which resulted in a delay in the production of the film (al-Akhbar 15-01-1974). Both articles are available on the DVD's extras (Rotana Film Distribution).

was young and male in the 70s does not remember her legs, opened provocatively and standing over the camera, establishing a powerful reaction shot from her co-actor, staring up at her (unseen) naked body in Abu Sayf's film *Malatili Bath*? After her marriage to actor and director Hasan Yusif (1934-) she acted in most of his films, but as of 1983 she decided to quit acting altogether upon donning the veil.[21] In *Woman With a Bad Reputation*, she is cast next to the famously romantic Mahmud Yasin (see earlier in this chapter) and the actor Yusif Sha'ban, famous for his less than masculine roles. The latter's characters' masculinity is always in a way compromised, either too much concerned with their outer appearance, or ostensibly abusing their position of power *as* men. Also 'Imad Hamdi plays an important part in the film, this time as a profiteering old man. In sum, there is not a single masculine ideal, not one man performing an acceptable masculinity, while Shams al-Barudi performs an exaggerated femininity, emphasizing her body and her emotional pleasure whenever a man pays her due attention.

The film opens with an establishing shot, following Hana's (al-Barudi) large American car through mostly empty Cairo streets. She arrives at an impressive building, entering the large hallway while the gazing camera remains still, letting her body slowly disappear out of screen. The building's doorman follows her up to the elevator, opening the door for her, cashing his baksheesh, addressing her respectfully with '*hānim*' (madam). The film then cuts to Sa'fan ('Imad Hamdi), who is wearing a housecoat and preparing for a romantic night. He hears the elevator arriving and approaches the door to look through the peephole, after which the camera shows his point of view to the audience. After entering the flat, she feasts on Sa'fan's many expensive gifts he brought from Europe. This initial scene conveys several things. First, Hana is a wealthy woman; second, she is respected by the less wealthy doorman; third, Sa'fan is her sugar daddy, which means her wealth is entirely thanks to him. And lastly, her body is depicted as an

21 She was one of many Egyptian actresses who quit their profession and decided to veil in a spout of piety in the 1980s and '90s (Abu-Lughod 1995; van Nieuwkerk 2013).

object, desired by the camera's male gaze, the audience's gaze and her co-actors' gaze as well.

These details are important, since the film will later explain through a series of flashbacks how she has reached her current status. Class and gender are at the core of this film's narrative. The audience is told how she got married at an early age, in order to alleviate her father's growing costs of providing for his family. However, she married a low-ranking clerk in a construction company with a lot of ambition to climb the social ladder and adhere to the new idealized consumerist lifestyle, represented by Western-looking parties, alcohol, women and fancy clothing and other expensive gadgets. The type representing this new consumerist lifestyle is the businessman who lives a life of luxury, who is a world traveler, has one or more mistresses, and never seems to be going about any business. Next to this hegemonic type of man is Hana's husband Kamal (Yusif Sha'ban). He is a subordinated man, a simple employee of Sa'fan, but also complicit to the hegemonic ideal. A third man in her life is her first love from her old neighborhood, Ahmad (played by Mahmud Yassin). He is a medical student (again!), somehow marginalized yet embodying the Nasirist modern ideals of education, marriage and a hopeful future in the service of his country as a doctor. He will initially pose a threat to the hegemony of the rich Sa'fan but will later moralistically reaffirm masculine domination over the woman's sexuality.

The film's plot has similarities with Barakat's earlier film, *Fine Thread*, starring Fatin Hamama and Mahmud Yasin. The role of the woman in the plot functions as mediator to advance her husband's or her lover's career. Women have been sacrificing themselves for the sake of their husbands or male family members ever since the beginning of Egyptian cinema. Yet, they were rarely *expected* to engage sexually with other men in order to raise their family's (read: husbands, lovers, male family members) social status.[22] In *Fine Thread* the female protagonist has a life of illegitimate relationships with men,

22 Salah Abu Sayf's film *Bidaya wa-Nihaya/Dead Among the Living* (1960) is an example of such a narrative, where a young woman decides to sell her body in order to provide for her family's expenses. But important to note is that Abu Sayf's plot demands the ignorance of the family members about her whereabouts.

as their good-looking mistress. However, her attention to a younger man (Mahmud Yasin) will eventually cast her downfall: as soon as he reaches a certain level of independence and financial success – on her account – his patriarchal surroundings convince him to leave her for the sake of his credibility and reputation. Thus, Fatin Hamama's character had sacrificed herself for the sake of her lover's career, but is ultimately unable to savor the fruits of her hard work, a similarity she shares with Shams al-Barudi's character Hana in *Woman With a Bad Reputation*.

Hana's fate will ultimately be decided upon by the men in her surroundings. Sa'fan as the patriarch is apparently entitled to all the women and her husband Kamal has no problem with this as long as it benefits his own career. But then she meets her 'first love', Ahmad, at a new year's party and entertains a sexual relationship with him. He initially takes no issue to sleep with Hana and entertain an adulterous relationship with her; he even convinces her to leave Kamal and promises to marry her. The events follow each other quickly, and upon graduation, Ahmad as a doctor is appointed to a hospital in the south. But then Hana uses her personal connection with Sa'fan to have Ahmad transferred back to Cairo, although without offering her body this time. Having divorced her husband – who kept all her possessions and forbade her from seeing their son based on the flimsy argument she is an adulterous woman – she meets Ahmad at a roadside café. Ahmad in the meanwhile has come to know who is behind his transfer and finally decides to leave her as well: he is suddenly reminded of his male pride and honor. The last shot is of Hana wandering off, her back to the camera, this time without fancy clothing or a large American car, in stark opposition to her status at the start of the film. She is literally cast out of the patriarchal, male-dominated society, which prefers to keep up appearances of feigned respectability.

The film poses a few interesting questions, portraying the point of view of Hana. It is her narrative, although she is also the object of a male gaze – literally at the start of the film through Sa'fan's hungry eyes peeping through his door. Can she then be described as a passive object of desire? Not really, since she herself was also infatuated with the promises of a 'better', materialist future. Weighing off her

possibilities within her family, she decides to participate and give in to her husband's requests "to be nice to Sa'fan Bey". But this focus on her narrative and the use of her body as object of desire make the film also ambiguous towards 'accepted' male behavior – accepted, that is, in the film's reality. Why would Sa'fan have the right to play around with his employee's wife? Why would Kamal not be implicated with his wife's 'bad reputation'? And why is it that the romantic Ahmad is allowed sexual intercourse out of wedlock with her, his conscience apparently not gnawing on him, but ultimately refuses to be with her? The next film, *My Blood, Tears, and Smile*, partly answers these questions, focusing less on the protagonist's body and more on her personal life as it is defined – against her will – by patriarchal authorities embodied by her mother in the first place, her husbands in the second place.

6.2.2 My Blood, Tears, and Smile

The plot of the film *My Blood, Tears, and Smile* is adapted to the screen by Kawthar Haykal, as she did with 'Abd al-Quddus' *Imbiraturiyyat Mim/M's Empire* (Husayn Kamal 1972). Husayn Kamal (1934-2003) is "one of four Egyptian directors who captivatingly adapted literary works to the screen" (Qasim 2010: 156).[23] According to Qasim he not only adapted the works of famous novelists, but also of young and lesser known writers. The director, son of an Egyptian father and a Greek mother, is no stranger to controversy, famous for his musical *Abi Fawq al-Shagara/My Dad's Up the Tree* (1969), starring the romantic singer 'Abd al-Halim Hafiz (1929-1977) in an unlikely role as a twenty-something college student and the boyfriend of the 'elder' Nadia Lutfi (1938-) in the role of seducing dancer in a nightclub.[24] The movie is famous for its presumed '100 kisses', but has also continued to play in the cinemas for an astonishing 53 weeks. Another of Kamal's films, *She' Min al-Khof/A Touch of Fear* (1969), was about to be censored because of its political critique of the regime. 'Abd al-Nasir is said to have allowed

23 The other three directors Qasim mentions are Salah Abu Sayf, Henry Barakat and 'Atif al-Tayyib. 'Atif al-Tayyib is known as the proponent of neo-realism in post-1970s Egyptian cinema.

24 It seems that famous singers are more likely to continue to play young roles, and to get away with it successfully. Umm Kulthum, for example, continued to play adolescent girls well into her forties.

the screening personally after watching the film, stating about the main character (played by Mahmud Mursi): "if I were truly so terrible, the people are right to kill me off".[25] It is doubtful that 'Abd al-Nasir would have said this, but the rumor serves to prove the former president's presumed 'democratic' principles and is testimony to the leader's charisma inspiring Egyptians up to this day.

The female protagonist in *My Blood, Tears, and Smile* is played by the actress Nagla' Fathi (1951-), famous for her victim-heroine roles. Her characters often bear the brunt of a patriarchal society with a stoic, almost masculine, acceptance of her fate. In this, she resembles Fatin Hamama, whose work she occasionally remade.[26] Here she plays next to the star actor Husayn Fahmi (1940-) and Nur al-Sharif. Husayn Fahmi is also known for his many romantic roles, although he also played less attractive roles of domineering – and even murderous – men. He acted opposite Su'ad Husni in Muhammad Khan's *Maw'id 'Ala al-'Asha'/Dinner Date* (1982) as her jealous and domineering husband. But he was also the star actress Nadia al-Gindi's pet (and finally jealous murderer) in Husam al-Din Mustafa's *Shahd al-Malika/The Queen's Honey* (1985) in an adaptation of one of the *Harafish*-stories written by Nagib Mahfuz. His characters are compromised: his blue eyes and blondish hair cast him in roles of seductive, romantic men, but he plays either hard to get – beautifully described in Su'ad Husni's song *Yā Wād yā Ti'īl [You Difficult Boy!]* in the popular musical *Khalli Balak Min Zuzu/Watch Out for Zuzu* (Hasan al-Imam 1972) – or he plays rather hard to get rid of, as per the films mentioned above.

In the film *My Blood, Tears, and Smile* class conflict and financial hardship play once again an essential role. Contrary to the previous

25 From elcinema.com.: http://www.elcinema.com/work/wk1005191/ retrieved 16.05.2014.

26 Nagla' Fathi's remakes of older films starring Fatin Hamama include *Hobb wa-Kibriya'/Love and Pride* (Hasan al-Imam 1972), a remake of Hamama's *Irham Dumu'i/Pitty my Tears* (Henry Barakat 1954) which itself was a remake of the film *Qalb al-Mar'a/Woman's Heart* (Togo Mizrahi 1940), starring 'the mother of Egyptian cinema', Amina Rizq. Another of Fathi's remakes is *Wida'an... li-'l-'Idhab/Farewell... to Torture* (Ahmad Yahya 1978), a remake of Hamama's *Ayyamna al-Hilwa/Our Beautiful Days* (Hilmi Halim 1955). For more information on Nagla' Fathi's star persona, I refer to chapter 9 on female directors and representations of female masculinity.

film, *Woman With a Bad Reputation*, the female protagonist Nahid (Nagla' Fathi) is squarely portrayed as the victim of patriarchal abuse. The film's opening credits show how the family has to sell part of their furniture and pack the rest to move to another apartment. Their bourgeois lifestyle comes under threat and they now have to live in a noisy popular area. It turns out her father had done a bad business deal and lost a large amount of money. The solution for this family – and a solution which the matriarchal mother in the first place encourages – is to marry her off to the cousin of a rich businessman and acquaintance of her father's, 'uncle' Salim (he is no actual relative). The marriage, however, is a sham and a cover-up for Salim's illegitimate interests in the girl. After running away from her forced marriage, she meets Mamduh (Husayn Fahmi), who initially seems to be able to help her and care for her.

Interestingly, her mother does not care about what Salim's intentions were; she argues that 'girls of good families don't get a divorce' and that her daughter is ultimately responsible for the fate of the family: her father made a good business deal with Salim after marrying his daughter to the former's cousin. Her daughter is a commodity which she trades (twice!), pointing at the new moral standard in society: money. She only agrees to Nahid's divorce and subsequent marriage to Mamduh after hearing how wealthy he and his family are. Both Salim and Mamduh embody a hegemonic masculinity as businessmen in an era of consumerism and materialism. Their hegemonic power is symbolized through different objects such as luxurious clothes (taken to its extreme with fur coats and gold watches), expensive jewelry and the stereotypical cigar. Mamduh for his part is the penultimate embodiment of the nouveau riche with all their contradictory character elements. Indeed, Nahid's and Mamduh's families' bourgeois Western lifestyles are juxtaposed with their affinity towards a traditionalist 'rational' marriage based on agreement between families rather than romance and love between two individuals, an individuality otherwise associated with Western capitalism.

The businessmen's masculinity is contrasted to the romanticized masculine performance of Nahid's 'first love', the student 'Isam (Nur

al-Sharif). 'Isam is a poor man, as a student, and as such does not occupy a strong negotiating position if he ever were to ask for the girl's hand. He is nevertheless portrayed as an ideal male: he cares for his mother, he is loved in the neighborhood and the neighbor's children love to play soccer with him. Ironically, they meet in the same 'poorer' neighborhood where Nahid and her family had recently moved in to at the start of the film. With the increasing presence of women in universities and public life (Hatem 1988: 413), films' narratives contributed to the idea of romantic love, meeting in public spaces such as universities, the work place and public transport – in the case of Nahid and 'Isam, a taxi. Contrasted with the arranged marriages of the patriarchal families – depicted negatively as coercion and abuse – the film challenges patriarchal norms, a longstanding tradition in Egyptian cinema (Armbrust 1998: 29), through the romantic counternarrative developing between Nahid and 'Isam.

The film starts and ends with this romantic side-narrative of the main plot. Nahid and 'Isam meet for the second time in front of his apartment building (the first time was in the taxi), and will meet for the last time – Nahid is a married woman now – at the end of the film, closing their narrative. They even share a passionate kiss, for which she is redeemed because of her husband Mamduh's demand to entertain his business partner, 'Abbas Bey, similar to Hana's husband Kamal in *Woman With a Bad Reputation*. However, Nahid decides to sacrifice herself for 'Isam's love: she is unable to run away with him and unworthy of his love for her because of the actions she has allowed herself to do. This way 'Isam's integrity and masculinity will remain uncompromised. The mistake Hana made in the other film is that she thought her actions would not matter that much for her boyfriend Ahmad, resulting in her expulsion from society.

Both these films – and other films from the 1970s[27] – have a number of similarities in terms of protagonists, plot development and themes.

27 Some examples of films from the 1970s with similar themes and narratives are *The Fine Thread* (Barakat 1971) with Mahmud Yassin and Fatin Hamama; *Where Is My Mind* ('Atif Salim 1974) with Mahmud Yassin and Su'ad Husni; and *Anf wa-Thalath 'Uyun/A Nose and Three Eyes* (Husayn Kamal 1972). Not

The films' protagonists are women whose actions and narrative are guided by patriarchal figures surrounding them. But these patriarchal authorities – mothers, fathers, husbands, male relatives – are questionable characters, portraying internal contradictions. Central in this contradictory behavior lays the abuse of the female protagonists' bodies. But simultaneously these same protagonists are willing to sacrifice themselves entirely, whether for their husbands or their lovers. I like to define the power these men exert as 'soft', considering they have "the ability to shape the preferences of others" (Nye 2009: 5). They have the ability to convince the women, with the lure of a progressive future of luxury and money, to do what the men want. It is presented as a need as well as a responsibility of the women towards their families. The women's desire for the underdog men in the films is potentially threatening, and ultimately the women are punished for their transgression – whether by losing everything or by continuing to live the morally questionable life they were forced in to.

On a more conceptual level, the films' plot is representative of a new discourse in 1970s Egypt. Women's position in the family and the personal status laws defining women's rights within the private sphere had come increasingly under scrutiny.[28] Films from the 70s contribute

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coincidentally, all four films – including *My Blood, Tears, and Smiles* are – as already mentioned – adaptations of novels by Ihsan Abd al-Quddus, which partly explain their narrative similarity. But, the trope of women using their bodies might also be an indication of the writer's and society's perception of the impending danger of women venturing outside the sanctity of the home, whether to study, work, or 'illicitly' meet men, which will eventually result in their dramatic downfall.

28 Personal status laws had not changed as progressively as women's movements had wanted. The personal status laws throughout the 50s and 60s had remained rather similar to those laws from the 1920s. In the 70s, these came more and more under pressure and one film has made them its central topic. Sa'id Marzuq's *Uridu Hallan/I Want a Solution* (1975) discusses these personal status laws and the inequality between men and women in terms of divorce. It is said that the film has contributed to a change in the divorce law in 1979 which stated that women were allowed to initiate divorce if their husbands were to marry a second wife. Under Mubarak, this law was weakened, with the additional clause that a divorce is only granted if women can prove the second marriage harms them, emotionally or physically. Under Mubarak's rule, in 2001, the *khul'* law came into effect, allowing women to initiate divorce. An important issue is that women in this case have no rights

to the discourse of male-female relations in the private sphere and indirectly signal what is coded as 'correct' male behavior as opposed to the patriarchs' prominent immorality. The marginalized but romanticized male in both films is then the embodiment of this ideal masculinity, although he finds himself in a subordinated position. He is nevertheless the one who might care and provide for the female protagonist and who might protect her from the perils of society, ironically signaling a return to patriarchy. In the end, masculine domination is still the wanted result; it is only renegotiated in new terms.

6.3 Discussion

In this chapter I have dealt with two different types of men. On the one hand there are the defeated men who are unable to cope with the new reality they live in after 1967. Everything they believed in or stood for appeared to have been either a dream or a blatant lie. They flee from society and from reality, escaping their responsibilities and lives and looking for their quintessential responsibility as protectors of the nation. They remind themselves nostalgically about an antiquated masculinity: the strong, confident man seeking his true self to be in symbiosis with everything around him, a man who can serve his country appropriately and not wither away in some café or a society inimical to masculine behavior. The defeated men are in search of a lost masculinity, foretelling a conviction that whatever it is they are longing for, or are lacking, they conceive of it as a lost item essential to construct their masculine identities.

On the other hand there is the compromising type of 'soft' men, the 'pretending intellectual'. He has proven to be able to adapt himself to his changing surroundings and reposition himself on top of the pyramid, so to speak. He has found a way of dealing with the feminine consumerist culture around him and appropriate it for himself as

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as divorcees (such as housing, allowances), essentially recreating women's dependence on male guardians (husband, family, the State).

simply a new environment but nonetheless one where he and his masculinity can thrive. These men are not looking for a different society or feel disabled because of it; they have changed masculine ideals of outdoors men, providers and protectors into softer indoor versions of men – neither providing nor protecting. Essentially these men too represent an implied masculine norm; the former cannot "be a man" without his (idea of) masculinity, while the latter has simply changed his (idea of) masculinity to suit the new reality and to perform adequately.

The juxtaposition of these 'new men', the antagonists of the female victim-heroine, to the marginalized masculinity of the romanticized student, functions, then, to reinforce the 'older' ideal of provider and protector. The romanticized students (as doctors, engineers, or other 'useful' professions to build the nation) are the unattainable modernist and bourgeois ideals, the men who are the most useful to society but are the least positioned to assert themselves. These films thus portray a sort of middle class angst towards the loss of the socialist goals of progress and education that the previous regime espoused. The young men's masculine performances on screen are idealized, yet they are also inadequate against the feared monopoly of the nouveau riche's immorality. In this way, the ideal young men and students are similar to the defeated men in the first part of this chapter.

7. Eighties Men: Historical Heroes and Contemporary Anti-Heroes

The previous three decades witnessed the portrayals of strong men, bullies and heroes in the 50s and 60s and of defeated and 'soft' men in the 70s. The present decade, the 1980s, signals a mixture of on the one hand representations of historical strong men and *futuwwāt*,[1] and on the other hand representations of contemporary anti-heroes. The era in which these films were made correspond to the early years of former president Husni Mubarak's reign. Tarik Osman described his public image as a calm leader, one that could offer "the hope of an Egypt restored to balance and given the time to nourish its weakened self-confidence" (Osman 2013: 166). The 80s followed tumultuous political and economic changes since the Free Officers coup in 1952, ushering in socialist inspired Nasirism and, following 'Abd al-Nasir's death in 1970, Sadat's liberal economic policies. The country had also entered into three major wars in less than two decades, the 1967 war virtually bankrupting Egypt and many of its nationalized industries.

In the cinema industry, which had recently been reprivatized under Sadat, we can discern new aesthetic developments as well. The 1970s were the start of a new mode of filmmaking, which Nouri Bouzid (1995) saw mainly as the results of the efforts of three filmmakers in Egypt, namely Youssef Chahine, Tawfiq Salih and Shadi 'Abd al-Salam. Bouzid did not believe this new activist mode continued in Egypt, although it constituted the basis of the new realism of the 1980s and 90s, with directors like Dawud 'Abd al-Sayyid, 'Atif al-Tayyib, Muhammad Khan, Ra'fat al-Mihi and Bashir al-Dik. Film critic 'Ali Abu Shadi (1998: 25-6) notes that the main characteristics of this new realism were a concern with contemporary reality through anti-heroes

1 In Egyptian Arabic, *futuwwa* is actually pronounced *fitiwwa* (see also Badawi-Hinds, A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic for the transliteration of the word). I have opted to use the Standard Arabic transliteration in order to avoid confusion, because the word appears in titles of books and articles (that are mentioned here) in Standard Arabic transliteration.

and filming in the streets. This new realist mode also meant a new approach to portrayals of gender relations. For both Bouzid and Abu Shadi, the main interest of this new realism, or at least its main purpose, was a truthful portrayal of reality.

Their accounts, however, assume a straightforward and one-way transmission of meaning. Indeed, for Bouzid, new realism is not so much a 'mode' but rather "a specific content that has a form" (Bouzid 1995: 249). Armbrust (1995), on the contrary, argues against both, claiming that the production of meaning is never a straightforward process. Films labeled as realist based on formal characteristics and their presumed 'truthful' depiction of reality, are not of interest for these subjective reasons. They are as much of interest as films critically denounced as 'commercial'. It is preferable to keep the meaning of realist films open to interpretation here, since they could anyway include multiple genres and filmmaking modes. Even melodramas from the previous decades are often talked about in terms of their depiction of an Egyptian reality, and we have seen in earlier chapters that melodrama and realism are not mutually exclusive. This tradition of earlier Egyptian films also continues in the present decade, the 1980s.

Armbrust's "myth of modernism" (id. 84) is a useful tool for analyzing the films of this era. He argues that films from before and after the 1970s apply a similar modernist discourse, although with different outcomes. The fact that he refers to it as a myth does not mean it is nonexistent, but rather that "its meaning differs according to social perspective" (id. 84). For those believing in this myth, it is thus experienced as real and tangible. Armbrust furthermore refers to the filmmaking practices as codes that convey modernist or (in the case of 80s films) anti-modernist messages. His conclusion is similar to Cavelti's argument that "not only the traditional genres but the cultural myths they once embodied are no longer fully adequate to the imaginative needs of our time" (Cavelti 2012: 296). As we have seen in the previous chapter, the devastating effects of the war of '67 had left the country (and the region) with no clear ideological path left. Pan-Arabism started to whither and even al-Sadat's liberal economic policies and peace treaty with Israel did not have the expected results

of more freedom and economic growth. In these changed times, the tragedies of poetic realism and melodrama as popular modes, with their modernist ideals, proved no longer relevant or desired.

The codes Armbrust refers to regarding 1980s films (and later) are grounded in the classical modes of earlier cinema, but with different outcomes. These codes consist of a juxtaposition of local versus foreign, but also folkloric versus classical expressions (as in 'low' versus 'high' language and culture), both in terms of narrative and image. These juxtapositions have already been discussed in the previous chapters, for example on how films portrayed the aristocratic ruling monarchy and their vassals as 'other' through their Western lifestyles. Egyptian cinema, Armbrust continues, has always used this binary in order to convey a modernist ideology based on the synthesis between local tradition and Western science and modernity. In pre-70s films this consisted of a modernist ideal, a synthesis of both binaries as ideal image of the nation. In post-70s films, this synthesis is absent. What remains are only the binaries, without a synthesizing resolution at the end of the film. As I have shown in the previous chapter, modernist and bourgeois ideals of education and a work ethic are slowly being problematized and replaced by social commentary on the loss of the ideal.

In the films analyzed in this chapter two paradigms of men with relatively similar ideals appear. On the one hand there is the group of men with an idealized masculinity, the *futuwwāt*, portrayed in historical dramas. On the other hand, there are the men portrayed in films that are generally considered examples of the new realist style of the 1980s, namely men as antiheroes. Both types of men and the corpus of films surrounding them have several things in common. Firstly, space plays an important role in the films, whether historical *futuwwa*- or underdog-films. The historical films always take place in the urban *ḥāra*, the local lower class neighborhood that is the centerpiece of the narrative. It is the place that defines people's lives, their futures as well as their pasts, it is an all-encompassing entity that welcomes those who play by its manmade rules, and threatens to kill or – more scandalous for the victimized male – exile its perpetrators. This space is prominent in the novels of Nagib Mahfuz, whose *Children*

of Gebelawi and *The Harafish* lie at the basis of the cosmos of a great number of *futuwwa*-films. The *ḥāra* in Mahfuz's novels is a microcosm and could be read as a metaphor for Egyptian society more general (Vatikiotis 1971: 171).[2] A similar metaphor is visible in the films based on Mahfuz's stories. Important to note is the author's undefined time and place in *The Harafish*, it takes place 'in a period before the rule of law', as a sentence at the start of the film *al-Shaytan Ya'iz/The Devil Preaches* (Ashraf Fahmi 1981) reminds us.

In the other corpus of films that present a contemporary crisis and underdog men, the *ḥāra* is exchanged for the more abstract city. This is a necessity because those new realist films attended to contemporary issues, with the city as their décor. One of the reasons to go out into the streets was also a practical one. After the bankruptcy of the public sector film industry, directors had not much choice but to go out in the streets instead of using the (bankrupt) nationalized studios. The focus is on the urban underground, usually in the capital Cairo. The modern city is a place of divisions and opposites, similar to the traditional and historical *ḥāra*: rich versus poor, strong versus weak, good versus bad. Another common element is the films' social critique, replete with class distinctions and generational and gender conflicts. Social critique is not a novelty; many of the films discussed in previous chapters convey social messages. The difference with older films incorporating social messages is not in topic, but rather in the style of the current films' critical stance towards modernism and a progressive future.

7.1 *Fatwana* in Egyptian historical dramas of the 1980s

"*Fatwana* isn't words, but deeds" ('Atris, *The Harafish*)

According to Malkmus and Armes (1991: 101) there is continuity in the narrative of *futuwwa*-films, what they call "men's melodrama", in a continuous loop of rise and fall only to be replaced by the next. But the films discussed in the present chapter are not always strictly following

2 Also Samia Mehrez makes a similar remark, noting that the *ḥāra* symbolizes Egyptian society in Mahfuz's novels (Mehrez 2008: 144).

the circular narrative pattern that Malkmus and Armes describe. Either by death or some other fateful event, the circle is broken. Lila Abu-Lughod's definition of 'development realism' (2005: 81) is a less constricting and more applicable way of approaching the particular genre, or rather, mode, of these films' aesthetics. Abu-Lughod continues, saying: "development realism idealizes education, progress, and modernity within the nation". As explained above, the modernist message – of education and progress – that cultural products are supposed to proliferate is questioned and critiqued in films from later decades, starting from the early 70s and more explicitly in the 80s.

In the context of the *infitāḥ* and the exponentially growing gap between rich and poor in Egypt in the late 1970s we can discern an emerging socially inspired cinema in the 1980s. The *futuwwa* is in this context a significant appearance on the screen. The *futuwwa*-films based on Mahfuz's novels have a political and revolutionary message, threatening the ruling classes to acknowledge the rights of the poor because if they don't "[the poor's] strength is in their numbers" as one *futuwwa* threateningly reminds us (*al-Tut wa-'l-Nabut/The Mulberry and the Cudgel*, Niyazi Mustafa, 1986). Their narratives are inspired by other stories and films, for example the Egyptian films *Lashin* and *The Tough Guy*, or even similar to Hollywood's version of Spartacus in 1960 by Stanley Kubrick. It is not a novelty to portray mutiny and revolts in an unjust society; the bread revolts in Egypt of 1977 were still fresh in the public's mind when these films were made.[3] Nevertheless, not all these films are per sé 'revolutionary' and depicting popular uprisings. Some of the films portray a coming-of-age narrative of the oppressed victim-hero (specifically with actor Nur al-Sharif). How does this particular male type, placed in the historical context in which the films are made, assert the necessity of change and who does the narrative hold responsible to initiate it? Through an analysis of the films' male types I will be able to answer this question and discuss how male hegemony is questioned, adapted and eventually reimposed.

3 Anwar al-Sadat had decided to remove the state support for basic staples (sugar, flower, oil, etc.) which resulted in huge riots across the country only to end when al-Sadat reinstated the support.

The masculinity of the *futuwwa* is essential in this process of reappropriation, as an idealized masculinity represented by local strongmen. The world of the *futuwwa* is per definition a binary world (drama versus action film, outside versus domestic world, strength versus intelligence, good versus evil, masculine versus emasculated, man versus woman, rich versus poor) and a male-dominated world. Just like most of the *futuwwa* in history were men – with the occasional woman (Salah 2012: 45) – so are most of the *futuwwa*-films about men.[4] Yet, the meaning of *futuwwa* and *fatwana* has changed over time (see Vatikiotis 1971; Jacob 2007) and its character rendered obsolete in the modern nation-state with institutions like a police force. According to Salah (2012: 13), it was most prevalent in the 18th and 19th centuries and particularly to cover the absence of a centralized government protecting its citizens after the fall of the Mamluk Empire resulting in localized strongmen. According to Jacob (2007), the *futuwwa* as an institutionalized form might have survived in Cairo among craftsmen. It is not my intention to use this type as evidence of a pre-modern time in transition towards a modern society, somehow represented in films in a postmodern era. Rather, the main argument is how this type might be understood in the context of the 1980s when the films were made, and what it says about gender representations in films from that era.

Considering the films' return to a 'violent' past, *before the rule of law* as they are often introduced, the films' narrative and genre are gendered too. It is reminiscent of action movies with multiple fights and deaths, rape, extortion and kidnapping, generally considered male activities in a male genre (action). The 1980s in other film industries also contained a hard masculinity with hard-bodied men.[5] Hard-bodied

4 With the exception of *Shahd al-Malika/The Queen's Honey* (Husam al-Din Mustafa 1985) that talks about the female *futuwwa* Zuhayra, played by Nadia al-Gindi and is also one of the stories of Mahfuz's novel *The Harafish*.

5 See Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (1994). Although according to Jeffords Hollywood productions in the 80s were affected by and affected right-wing politics, the hard-bodied masculinity in Egyptian cinema does not follow in that same line and instead contributes to a new realist mode in cinema. Yet, it is also proof of the middle class fear of social disintegration and lack of implementing the law, resulting in corrupt

males return in other Egyptian films of the era, like the Egyptian version of *Rocky*, *al-Nimr al-Iswid/The Black Panther* ('Atif Salim 1984) with Ahmad Zaki playing the role of migrant worker in Germany.[6] Other Egyptian examples abound, particularly in the 1990s with Egyptian action-heroes like al-Shahat Mabruk, the Egyptian body-building champion, and the Kung Fu fighter Yusif Mansur who both made several pulp action films displaying their muscularity.

7.1.1 The Devil Preaches

One of the first *futuwwa*-films made in the 1980s is *The Devil Preaches* (Ashraf Fahmi 1981, original story written by Nagib Mahfuz in 1979). Director Ashraf Fahmi (1939-2001) belongs to the first group of students that graduated from the Cinema institute, established in 1959. Upon graduation he continued studying cinema in the United States. Mahmud Qasim describes his cooperation with screenwriter Mustafa Muharram as the most important period in his career (Qasim 2010: 78), adapting novels to the screen and remaking films – both Egyptian and foreign –such as the films *al-Raqisa wa-'l-Tabbal/The Dancer and the Drummer* (1984) from a novel by Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus and *Imra'a 'Ashiqa/A Desiring Woman* (1974), a remake from the American film *Phaedra* by the American director Jules Dassin. The main characters in his films are always subjected to a great deal of injustice and an unlikely accumulation of bad luck, as is the case with the main character in *The Devil Preaches*, the young *futuwwa* Shata, played by Nur al-Sharif.

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and immoral nouveau rich taking over. This is occasionally embodied by the 'corrupt' *futuwwa* in some films, as opposed to the more appropriate and acceptable – yet also not flawless – performances of other *futuwwāt*. This 'ideal' masculine performance changes in more recent films as of the 2000s, with new, 'muscular' men presenting a tough masculinity, based on the external properties (bodily strength and muscularity) of '*futuwwa*' idealism.

6 The film *The Black Panther* is in the first place a critique of the consequences for and treatment of migrant workers, whether in Germany or elsewhere. The fact that Ahmad Zaki is also a capable boxer enables him to build a career as a foreigner in a new country. His masculine identity is defined in terms of his race and gender, being an Arab man in Germany, although the film only superficially touches upon the subject of race.

The antagonists of the young and inexperienced *futuwwa* are first of all *ma'allim* al-Dinari (Farid Shawqi), the leader of the *futuwwāt* in Shata's old neighborhood. The other one, al-Shibli, is al-Dinari's archrival. The actor playing *ma'allim* al-Shibli is 'Adil Adham (1928-1996). Adham started his acting career with serious critique from one of the giants of theatre; Anwar Wagdi told him he should "only act in front of the mirror" (Qasim 2004: 295). He was a tall and athletic man, playing various sports and working as a cotton trader at the Alexandria Stock Exchange. But he would eventually find his way to the cinema. His nickname is *al-brins*, The Prince, for the many diverse roles he could convincingly deliver. He is mostly known for his roles as the bad guy, probably because he was cast for these roles considering his imposing figure and loud, deep voice. He appeared dominant and violent, inducing fear in those he opposed, and as such is cast as the perfect actor to play the role of the dominant man that al-Shibli is.

The film is squarely placed in a historical cadre (although we do not know when exactly), opening with the statement "Egypt, in a period before the rule of law", referring to the *futuwwa*'s policing role prior to the establishment of a working police force. The opening shots – people shouting and running away, emptying the streets – are an indication for the arrival of a fearful person, in all likelihood one of the *futuwwāt*. The star actor Farid Shawqi, in his role as al-Dinari, walks steadfastly towards the now empty *ḥāra*, stopped by three men who are holding a knife or wearing brass knuckles, while al-Dinari is only holding on to his *nabūt* (the stick that symbolizes the *futuwwa*'s status, power, and honor). Although aged and slightly obese, he easily manages to beat all three of them in a single blow: Shawqi's star persona still does him right after thirty years of portraying 'tough guys'. Then, the film's opening credits appear, after which it introduces us to the main character, Shata.

Shata is sitting in a local café, talking with the close adviser of al-Dinari, *ma'allim* Tabba'. Although the film is situated in the past, the café already has a radio, and a song by the singer Muhammad 'Abd al-Muttalib is playing, singing "the time that's passed won't return".[7]

7 The song that is playing is called *Wada' Hawak*, by the singer and film producer Muhammad 'Abd al-Muttalib. His music is characterized by the use

Tabba‘ is annoyed by the song’s lyrics and asks to put the volume down, which Shata uses as a pretext for smashing the radio altogether. This will eventually be his way in to the close circle around al-Dinari. The film is an interesting play on the codes of modernity that Armbrust (1995) mentions. The radio embodies these modernist codes all at once: it is an example of Western science, symbolizing a progressive future, playing a folkloric song that is combining traditional Arab instruments and rhythms with European instruments and style, while its lyrics remind the listeners about the fact that time progresses and the past will not return. By smashing the radio device and silencing the singer’s words, the film immediately puts an end to this modernist ideology of synthesis between a classicist and local, vernacular, identity, strengthened by Western science and technology. The film then continues to present the ‘new’ hegemonic power structure – if we read it as a metaphor for contemporary Egypt – based on power and coercion, rather than education and a bourgeois work ethic.

Shata looks up to the man that al-Dinari is, and the masculinity he espouses, because he dominates whatever space or situation he finds himself in, winning one fight after another. Shata is literally enticed (*mughrā*) by the man, hoping to become like him one day. He tells Tabba‘ that he is not an ironer;[8] his body is fit for fighting and protecting the neighborhood, just like al-Dinari does. He is a young and ambitious kid, but the *ma‘allim* and *fitiwwit il-ḥāra*[9] al-Dinari is not yet convinced of the young man’s intentions. The film then gives a clear definition of what the values of *fatwana* are when al-Dinari talks to his men, saying: “True *fatwana* isn’t just strength (*’iwwa*) and

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of traditional instruments and melodies. In 1964 he received ‘The Order of the Republic’ from then president Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasir.

8 Ironing is typically a man’s job in Egypt. Ironing shops are visible all over the city up to the present day, where only men work. This is not such a strange fact, considering the iron in earlier periods was a heavy iron cast which the men guided with their legs and feet rather than with their hands. The point in the film is not that he has to iron, the point here is that he no longer wants to be merely an inhabitant with no claims to make about his neighborhood or how to protect it (and his family).

9 As a reference to what is being said in the film, I have chosen an Egyptian Arabic transliteration (see also reference 1).

bravery (*shagā'a*), it requires toughness (*magda'a*), manliness (*rugūla*), and morals (*akhlā'*)." Although these descriptions are often associated with men, in Egypt it is not uncommon to hear these with regard to women as well, for example in the expressions "*il-bint di gada'a*" [that girl's tough],[10] or "*is-sitt 'add mīt rāgil*" [a woman equals a hundred men]. Each of these elements encompass a set of characteristics on their own (e.g. *gada'*), associated with masculine behavior (*rugūla*), a masculinity that is coded as positive and desirable.

Particularly the aspect of 'manliness' as a requirement to be a true *futuwwa* is an indication of which gender is more suitable to actually be one in al-Dinari's and the film's view. In this all-male film with al-Dinari addressing a mustache-bearing and stick-wielding audience, his description is clearly intended for men only.[11] This brings to mind Connell's assertion that "[t]rue masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies – to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body" (Connell 2005: 45). These idealistic values of *fatwana* as 'true masculinity' are here clearly associated with men, rather than women. In part, this is also due to the etymology of the word, which is derived from the same triradical root as *fatā* (f-t-w), meaning 'boy', and historically referred to brotherhoods or groups of young men who were taught the principles of *fatwana*.[12]

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10 Badawi-Hinds gives a much more extensive translation for the word *gada'*, which includes a whole range of adjectives coded as positive and masculine: noble and integer; witty; tough and courageous. It means that not being *gada'*, means not being manly. It is telling that the term, often associated with men, is used to describe women as well, although it forestalls a masculine norm because they are foremost characteristics coded as masculine that only best of men and occasionally women may inhibit.

11 Some historical lower class women have been able to obtain high-regarded positions within the confines of the *ḥāra*. For this I refer to Sawsan el-Messiri (1978) and Nahid Salah (2012) and the chapter on female masculinity in this study.

12 The *futuwwa* remains until today a complex concept. Early orientalist accounts described it in terms of a medieval chivalry, although it might also be described in religious terms as the groups of (mainly young) men practicing *taṣawwuf*, or mysticism. Of interest is the way in which they appear in Egyptian cinema, which is either somehow chivalrous – occasionally, and whenever it suits *them* – or as a criminal. Personally, I would not describe these portrayals as romanticized medieval chivalry, nor approach it as an

Although masculinity is associated with men's bodies, Connell notes that this does not mean that a body coded as male 'naturally' performs masculinity, as the etymology of the word *futuwwa* also indicates. True *fatwana* is a process of learning, of incorporating a set of religiously and culturally sanctioned values which are coded as masculine.

In *The Devil Preaches* the main character Shata al-Hagari considers himself up to the heavy task of *fatwana* and accepts the initiation job that al-Dinari has in store for him. The *ma'allim*'s main concern is that the one accepting the task will execute it exactly as requested by him, no questions asked. This, in my opinion, contradicts one of the ideals of *fatwana*, namely morals. Shata, however, agrees to the terms and conditions of becoming a *futuwwa*, receives a *nabūt* and starts with his task. The first test that Shata has to undergo is to lure al-Dinari's fiançée in a trap. Shata refuses to continue with the task, his morality does not allow him to do so, escaping with the girl to a different *ḥāra* under the protection of al-Dinari's arch-rival al-Shibli. This way, Shata already portrays the internal contradictions of the ideal values of *fatwana*. Upon arrival, it is obvious that al-Shibli will assert his dominance over this new intruder, effectively emasculating him by first of all taking away Shata's *nabūt*, and degrading him once again to the rank of mere inhabitant (working in an ironing shop) in his new neighborhood. This continues for a few months, until al-Shibli shows his true intentions with Shata's wife Widad. As the *ma'allim* and *futuwwa* of the neighborhood, al-Shibli is not only the head of a sort of policing force, he is also a local governor and a judge. As such he decides on all matters in the neighborhood, including who marries whom. Al-Shibli thus forces Shata to divorce his wife, who then refuses, after which the former affirms his dominance over these intruders by raping Widad and ultimately shaming Shata.[13] With

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ahistorical masculine ideal sometimes imbibed with Islamic morals and values as per orientalist descriptions of the term. Jacob (2007) explains most clearly why, as it very much depends on the local contexts in which it was allowed to emerge, flourish or to be marginalized.

13 Viola Shafik (2007: 256-8) mentions the prevalence of the rape narrative in Egyptian melodramas from the start of Egyptian cinema and particularly in the period preceding the '52 coup, thus under British occupation. She reads it as a metaphor for class differences, as well as referring to the 'rape of the

bowed heads, they both have to return to al-Dinari who – as a true *futuwwa* – accepts their return unconditionally.

The two men clashing initially in this film are al-Dinari and Shata, the older ruler and the ambitious and idealistic youngster. Shata has his own ideas about what it means to be a *futuwwa*; harassing women or luring them into a man's arms is not one of them. But he is mistaken and 'misunderstood' the task, resulting in a harsh, moralistic punishment for him and Widad. Indeed, the rape scene shows that it is not so much the woman's suffering that is emphasized, but rather Shata's (and by extension al-Dinari's and the *ḥāra*'s) subsequent shame and further emasculation by al-Shibli that is the main issue in the film. Shata thus has to regain his masculinity and the only way to do so is by killing al-Shibli. In the final fight between the two *futuwwāt*, Shata is allowed to fight as well (regaining possession of the prized *nabūt*). The final battle between the two men is juxtaposed with his wife Widad giving birth to a child – his or al-Shibli's? – comparing the pain she is undergoing during labor with Shata's injuries in the fight. But he is able to kill his adversary, cutting out his heart and holding it up for the *ḥāra* to see. Inattentive, Shata is attacked from the back and his throat is cut, right at the moment the child is born. The line thus ends here, for Widad is not willing to raise her son to become a killer – like the *futuwwa* – but rather to teach him love and compassion. The last scene of the film returns to the café where Shata first met with Tabba'. The owner has already replaced his radio, and the same song is playing, and the next boy to become al-Dinari's assistant is presenting himself.

The masculinity that al-Dinari lauded at the start – the idealized *fatwana* he talked about – is divided over three characters: al-Dinari, al-Shibli, and Shata. Al-Dinari's dominance was initially challenged by Shata, who subsequently will have to accept it. Al-Dinari is tough, but just; he rules firmly, but with the required compassion and humanity as well. He rules unchallenged, since Shata's only way of avoiding his

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nation'. In this film, it might be both, but I prefer to read it as it is: a violent attack on the woman's body in order to assert a dominant position over the powerless, on-looking husband as well as an act of violence and insult against al-Shibli's rival, al-Dinari.

hegemonic rule, is by fleeing the neighborhood. Al-Shibli is presented as evil, although he is the one who takes in the refugees, initially pays for the marriage of Shata and Widad, and offers him a little shop where he can work. But al-Shibli is ultimately only interested in safeguarding his dominant position – and the intrusion of two refugees from his archrival might endanger his status in the neighborhood. The idealistic Shata is different from the other two. Shata the ironer questions al-Dinari's authority, but out of fear for his life has to run away. Only at the end, Shata is able to regain his honor and masculinity by using violence himself, a similarity with the effendi masculinity of the schoolteacher Ahmad in *Super 'Aziza*. Only this time, Shata is killed and the fact that he was able to stop 'evil' in favor of a more just society is eliminated with his death. Shata is thus only considered a man when he not only resorts to violence – what he wanted to do from the beginning and what he considered the essence of *fatwana* as a means to protect the weak – but also when he agrees to the rules set out and reinforced by the elder al-Dinari. Being a man is thus something Shata has to learn. But once he learned it, he is killed, his masculinity – defined by the honor-revenge paradigm – directly responsible for his death.

But how are we to understand this aspect of honor? Abu-Lughod (1986: 33) argues that a code of honor functions ideologically and "serves to rationalize social inequality and the control some have over the lives of others in a system that idealizes the equality of agnates and the autonomy of individuals." It is a system of control for those in dominant positions – assured through their economic autonomy – over those in subjugated positions, whose only recourse is modesty. The *futuwwa*'s code of honor is an essential element to ensure his domination over his lower ranks and the people in the neighborhood he has laid his claims on. Thus, al-Shibli makes sure that Shata is subjugated, by taking away his autonomy, represented by his *nabūt*. Shata's only recourse to regain his autonomy and masculinity and to regain his honor is by taking revenge on the man that had taken it away from him. Ultimately, the film questions the masculinity that the *futuwwa* represents, by cutting off Shata's prospects for the future, but unlike Abu Sayf's *The Tough Guy* from 1957, it ends with an ironic

question: if everyone were to become a *futuwwa*, Tabba' asks himself, then who will get beaten? Returning to Armbrust's argument about the anti-modernism in post-70s films, Tabba''s question evokes the lack of belief from the point of view of the film and the filmmaker in the modernist discourses that were so prevalent in earlier Egyptian cinema. Further, it breaks with the presumed circularity that Malkmus and Armes noted, when Widad decides to do away with masculine domination and to teach her son humane values rather than dated notions of a presumed idealized and valorized masculine type.

7.1.2 The Harafish

The Harafish is also based on a novel with the same title by Nagib Mahfuz, published in 1977. The novel is a family saga, starting with the famous 'Ashur al-Nagi, *futuwwat al-ḥarafīsh*, the defender of the weak and the commoners. The al-Nagi family has since taken control of the neighborhood, which remains unnamed and undated in the novel and the film. Without apparent descriptions of anything modern, apart from an occasional reference to the police, an element of the modern state, it remains unclear when exactly the story takes place. This is important for the film as well, since the mythical world of Mahfuz should be read metaphorically. El-Enany reads *The Harafish* as a novel portraying Mahfuz's world, "condensing reality into a tail-made myth of his own" (el-Enany 1993: 145). The author intended to keep the exact time and place ambiguous, in order to focus on the human nature more prominently. The film, adapted to the screen by Husam al-Din Mustafa in 1986, presents us with a human *futuwwa*, not flawless at all, who has to fight his way to the top.

Husam al-Din Mustafa (1926-2005) was a prolific director, famous for his action films and adapting many novels to the screen. Throughout his fifty-year career he has directed more than a hundred films. Some of his most famous films are *Adham al-Sharqawi* (1964), about the life of the 'Robin Hood of the Arabs', and *al-Naddara al-Soda/The Black Sunglasses* (1963) with Nadia Lutfi in the main part as the bored daughter of a rich aristocratic family. The film was an adaptation of a story by Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus. He has also adapted foreign literature to the Egyptian screen, most notably by the Russian

author Dostoyevsky (Qasim 2010: 130). In the 70s and 80s he has also directed several films situated in lower class neighborhoods, one of which will be discussed in chapter 9 on female masculinities. His interest – like Nagib Mahfuz – in lower- and working-class areas returns in many of his films, depicting men and women facing a rough world. The current film, *The Harafish*, with its timeless setting, also portrays a tough reality in which the commoners are trying to survive notwithstanding the whims of the rich.

The main character in the film is Sulayman al-Nagi, played by the actor Mahmud Yasin. Because of his soft appearance, his claim to become *futuwwat al-ḥāra* is laughed away by the inhabitants of the neighborhood. The more masculine-looking tough guy, 'Atris (played by Salah Qabil), has more credibility for the position and claims his 'right' to the title. An important role is played by the actress Safiyya al-'Imari (1949-), portraying Saniyya, the daughter of a wealthy merchant, who is soon to be married to Sulayman in order to reel him in and work for the rich's advantage. She plays alongside Sulayman's first wife, played by Sawsan Badr (1957-), one of the most famous actresses to this day, usually portraying caring mother figures, but with a tough no-nonsense attitude. She was instantly propelled into fame because of her performance in the controversial British documentary-drama *Death of a Princess* (Antony Thomas 1980). It is interesting to note that Mahmud Qasim's *Encyclopedia of Actors* does not mention this controversial episode in her life, which caused the Egyptian television to banish her from the small screen. The media exile did not last long, however, since she continued acting in major film productions, in the first place portraying oppressed women like her role as Fathiyya, Sulayman's barren wife in the current film.

The Harafish is different from the previous film, *The Devil Preaches*, in that it contains the actual revolutionary force of the poor, the *harafish* or commoners. The film follows the lives of the Nagi-family after the death of the "father of the *harafish*", 'Ashur al-Nagi. His grandson, Sulayman, intends to follow in his father's footsteps, although his father on his death bed tells him he "did not leave behind a man [who inherited his *fatwana*]." Sulayman promises he will learn it, yet nobody takes him seriously. The discussion in the beginning of the film

between Sulayman and the *shaykh al-ḥāra* (neighborhood's elder and respectable inhabitant) is informative in this regard:

Shaykh al-ḥāra: What's this Sulayman, why are you carrying your deceased father's nabūt*?*
Sulaimain: I want the title [of fatwana*].*
Shaykh al-ḥāra: Your father would've given it to you before he died. However, all his life he was saying...
Sulayman: ... that I am not into fatwana*. But I can't accept that justice and* fatwana *are taken away from the House of al-Nagi.*
Shaykh al-ḥāra: My son, fatwana *is not an intention.*
Sulayman: I'll learn it.
Shaykh al-ḥāra: It's a long road.
Sulayman: I'll take it.
Shaykh al-ḥāra: And difficult!
Sulayman: I'll bear it.

(Husam al-Din Mustafa, *The Harafish*)

A *futuwwa* is not only a set of characteristics like strength, morality and integrity; it is a lifestyle that once you take it there is no way back. In Mahfuz's world, the *futuwwa* is a human being and not an ideal figure: he too makes mistakes or takes questionable decisions. This more natural depiction of the *futuwwa* with internal contradictions is also visible in this and other *futuwwa*-films of the 80s. In the next part of the chapter, I will show how the anti-heroes are also portrayed in a less ideal, more credible manner.

Sulayman starts his career as an ideal, principled *futuwwa*, but soon his virtues start to wane and he descends into a life of luxury. His marriage to Saniyya is the start of the decline of the man's credibility as *futuwwa*. His older, barren wife Fathiyya no longer interests him, although he promises her he will live under one roof with his two wives, as a down-to-earth man. During the wedding procession, full of luxury, horses, music and flags, the camera cuts and zooms in on Fathiyya, standing behind a barred window, as if imprisoned by her husband, but also restrained by her poverty, her gender, and the fact

that she was unable to give him a child.[14] The film goes on to show the different upbringing of Sulayman's two sons, Khidr and Bakr. Khidr – his firstborn – was raised under the code of '*fatwana*' by his father, while Bakr was left for his mother to raise him as she wanted. Two decades later when the boys have grown up, the difference is immediately visible. Khidr is calm, reserved, rational and reasonable, brave and courageous, just and protecting the poor and the weak. Bakr on the other hand is spoiled, hysterical, emotional and weak; he is shown beating his wife and is on more than one occasion derogatorily referred to as *ibn ummu [son of his mother]*. The insult is meant to illuminate his lack of masculinity, characterized by *fatwana*, and embodied by his brother, Khidr. Bakr is the 'other', the 'unmasculine' man. His unmasculine performance is, however, not ridiculed. On the contrary, he is backed by his rich mother and wealthy family. Further, he is not always bad; he does love his family, including his brother and father who never got involved with his upbringing, but was only interested to instill the values of *fatwana* in his eldest son.

The film therefore does not presume an inherent nature for *all* men. Masculinity and *fatwana* are not born or inherited, but learned and fought for. This also means that there is a great deal of effort that goes into this performance of *fatwana*, pointing at its artificiality and the 'spectacle' of this masculine performance. Yvonne Tasker, in her account of bodybuilding, notes that it "raise[s] a familiar paradox over the coming together of naturalness and performance" (Tasker 1993: 232). The *futuwwa* here is not exactly a bodybuilder, but the requirements and effort that go into taking its heavy weight (as

14 The power the first wife exerts on the second is beautifully portrayed by director Salah Abu Sayf in the film *al-Zoga al-Tanya/The Second Wife* (1967). The village chieftain desires his young, pretty servant, but she is already married to a poor peasant. He forces them to divorce in order for him to take her as a second wife. Initially, his first wife – unable to give him a child – continues to treat her as a servant. The young girl refuses to consume the marriage with her new husband; instead, she has sex with her first husband and gets pregnant from him. Once she is pregnant, she assumes the role of first wife in the chieftain's house, who is then struck down with a stroke and unable to speak because he is the only one who knows that the child is not his. The pregnancy is what gave her more rights in the house, an essential element also in the current film.

explained in the dialogue above) are recognizable demands, similar for those wishing to do the immense workout regime in order to obtain and maintain a bodybuilder's physique. Being a *futuwwa* is also a performance, it is something which one has to learn and perform on a daily basis, although its characteristics are assumed to be natural, masculine ideals. The masquerade that the *futuwwa* proves to be is one of an 'original'. Although this and the previous film focus on men – and so do most of the *futuwwa*-films – the ideal is not only available for men; hence, those women who take leading positions and who are respected by their surroundings and consulted on important matters can be described as *gada'a* in Egypt, one of the ideals of *fatwana*.

The performative element of *fatwana* lies in the fact that both Sulayman and his eldest son Khidr had to prove themselves to attain the 'highest' of titles a man can hold. This way, however, the film assumes that *fatwana* is the ideal, one that 'good men' should try to attain, while being off limits for other, subjugated and marginalized men as well as women. Through a portrayal of what a *futuwwa* is not – either through women, unmasculine men, or abusive patriarchs – this and similar films make a clear statement of what it means to be a (good) man. The hegemony of (certain) men is not questioned by it, neither is the patriarchal structure governing this microcosmos, the film only distinguishes between acceptable and unacceptable male behavior. Although revealing the fictive norm that the *futuwwa* is, it also reaffirms its desirability. The *futuwwa*'s world remains a man's world: women are only depicted as supportive wives; they can move around the *ḥāra* to buy products from the market, they can even take on high positions as traders. But they cannot decide on matters regarding the *ḥāra*; Sulayman al-Nagi makes it clear that he "doesn't negotiate with women" at the beginning of the film, soon after doing exactly the opposite and marrying Saniyya to satisfy his desire for her body.

We should keep in mind that the world of the *futuwwa* is strongly informed by Nagib Mahfuz's mythic world of social relations. All the films are either adaptations from his novels or he has contributed to writing the scenarios. As a value system of ideal human behavior,

fatwana is in this world, however, mostly associated with men. Nevertheless, they all exhibit certain internal contradictions: Shata's morality does not allow him to blindly perform the task that the *futuwwa* had given him; Sulayman had to prove his *fatwana* through a fight, but eventually will also give in to his desires and a life of luxury, ignoring his values. In each of the films, the *futuwwa*'s hegemonic rule is questioned at a certain point by another, sometimes younger, *futuwwa*. The man's internal contradictions are laid bare. Eventually the masculine ideal of the *futuwwa* is reimposed in *The Harafish*, while its ideal is questioned in *The Devil Preaches.*

Male agency is, however, never questioned. On the contrary, it is expected, while female agency is only slightly mentioned in one film while painfully neglected (or worse, punished) in most other, similar, films. The fact that these films are all placed in an undefined past, adds to the ahistorical ideal that true *fatwana* is considered to be. This ideal is furthermore inscribed onto the male body, through the embodiment of *fatwana* and its values by mainly male actors and characters. The one film with a female *futuwwa* is *The Queen's Honey*, with the actress Nadia al-Gindi in the main role. Her role as *futuwwa* is directly connected to her body in her ability to attract men. This singular female *futuwwa*'s body is portrayed as desirable, similar to the male *futuwwa*'s ideal and desirable physical characteristics of strength and power. Her agency as a woman and as *futuwwa* is, however, violently punished at the end of the film when she is murdered by one of her ex-husbands, a rich trader. Such plot developments point at the films' ambiguous stance toward a presumed masculine ideal, an ideal that is portrayed as ineffective in the current surroundings. In the next part of the chapter we will deal with another paradigm of inadequate masculinity, as portrayed by contemporary antiheroes.

7.2 The pessimistic future of the anti-hero

"Don't bite your masters, dog!" (Ratib Bey, *The Kidnapped Girl*)

The quote in the title comes from the film *al-Makhtufa/The Kidnapped Girl* (Sharif Yahya 1987), and perfectly explains the social critique of these films and the subjugated positions the anti-heroes occupy. The films with an underdog main male character are pessimistic films about the present with a negative outlook for the future: in the end, the anti-hero dies, enters prison, or loses everything he worked so hard for during the film. The films emphasize the underdog position that these men possess, for example through insults like the quote above signaling a strong class divide that even reminds of the country's colonial past. In social realist films from the 50s and 60s it was not uncommon to hear a similar tone from the ruling classes addressing the working and lower classes in films set in feudal Egypt.

In the introduction to this chapter I mentioned the emergence of a new realist cinema, a tendency that had started already in the 1970s with directors like 'Ali 'Abd al-Khaliq, Ashraf Fahmi and 'Ali Badrakhan (Abu Shadi 1998: 23-5). Whereas films in the 70s had to deal with the new reality of Sadat's economic *infitāḥ*, the 80s directors dealt with its effects: a polarized society with a growing class divide, unfit housing for the poor, a pauperizing middle class and the increasing morality of money, a feature already emerging in the 70s. While the *futuwwa*-films talked about this indirectly and metaphorically – they were situated in an undated past – these contemporary films tackle those issues head on. Of course not all men in films from this era are either historical *futuwwāt* or contemporary underdogs. A notable exception in the realist films of this period is Khayri Bishara's *al-Tawq wa-'l-Iswirra/The Necklace and the Bracelet* (1986). It is a film set in the rural south of the 1930s about a strong, *Ṣa'īdi* (southern-Egyptian) man, but who is unable to sleep with his wife and ultimately blames her for his impotence. The film is not only set in the past, it for once also portrays the personal

struggles of that *Ṣaʿīdi* man's sexuality, whose masculinity is otherwise ridiculed and the object of laughter in Egyptian cinema.[15]

The *underdog*-films have several elements in common, for example class and racial differences, generational conflict, or the anti-hero's troubles with official representatives of the government or the law. Police and police officers are not usually playing a positive force in the films, rather the opposite. In previous decades police were perhaps not pivotal characters in the films, they were nevertheless part of the modernist discourse and the presence of the state in, for example, traditional neighborhoods. Now they do have a more visible presence in the narrative, though mostly as a force that obstructs the anti-hero's desires. In part this relates also to the films' anti-modernist rhetoric, but more important here are the political implications. The police are not always actively obstructing the anti-heroes; rather mostly due to their passiveness and inability to implement the law, the anti-heroes are unable to receive what is rightfully theirs. The police's presence is mostly necessary to emphasize the law's siding with the rich, rather than with the 'poor citizen', *al-muwāṭin al-ghalbān*, that the hero embodies.[16]

The 'poor citizen', the anti-hero, also embodies the demise of the middle class, or in the words of Armbrust (1995: 105): "a middle class in danger of extinction". He is a citizen who struggles to survive and provide for his family; his work ethic, that assumes the man is the

15 Ziad Fahmy (2012) attributes the *Ṣaʿīdi*'s negative portrayal in cultural products to their different dialect, different from the 'standard' Cairene Egyptian dialect. In popular culture like films or series and even jokes, the *Ṣaʿīdi* is often the object of ridicule, the "other" (Fahmy 2012: 8) inside the nation. Up until the present day these stereotypes – of the ignorant, violent, misogynist, extremist Southern male – are reinforced in comedies, dramas and action films.

16 The police's presence in films has changed significantly over time: undesired in the 1940s, heroicized in the 50s and 60s, corrupt in the 70s and 80s, they have returned to a positive representation from the 90s onward. The representation of corrupt officials is not omitted entirely in the recent films; there is always at least one honorable high-ranking officer. The 'bad guys' in the police force are also associated with backwardness and ignorance, signaling a class divide within the police force as well. This way, however, films continue to ignore and deny the structural corruption and violence in Egypt's Ministry of Interior.

provider, is in danger. The male characters are either married and sole breadwinners, or they are unmarried and need to provide for a sick father or mother and several siblings all the while trying to prepare for marriage – a marriage crisis that will become an essential narrative element in future films and part and parcel of the discourse of crisis.[17] They all have a job, however, sometimes even more than one, although usually in the informal sector.[18] Central to this problem remains the men's conviction that "work not only matters *to* men, but is also part *of* them as a key dimension of their identity and masculinity" (Edwards 2006: 7). It is an essential element, and being without work somehow emasculates them. Although Edwards's claim is based on Western research, there are similarities with Egypt. Egypt, too, has recently witnessed privatization and declining work opportunities for men, not to mention the increasing presence of women on the work floor since 'Abd al-Nasir, a policy that was continued by al-Sadat as well. Men thus felt threatened in their traditional role as provider, increasingly unable to adhere to that masculine ideal.

7.2.1 The Bus Driver

A prominent new-realist director who has directed several films with a pessimistic view on humanity and society is 'Atif al-Tayyib (1947-1996), the director of *Sawwaq al-Utubis/The Bus Driver* (1982). He was greatly influenced by Salah Abu Sayf and other earlier realist film directors, but adapted cinematic realism to his own surroundings and time.

17 I refer here to Hanan Kholoussy's commentary on the discourse of a marriage crisis in Egypt. She notes that the recent discourse (particularly since 2008) and the earlier one in the early 20th century point at anxieties that "have peaked whenever Egypt finds itself in the midst of socioeconomic and political upheaval" (Kholoussy 2010b, para. 12). Rather than investigating causes and concerns of the marriage crisis, the discourse about this assumed crisis is primarily informative regarding popular assumptions about this crisis. For example, as Kholoussy points out, focusing on the delay in marriage among young men and blaming women for this, assumes that women are passively waiting for an appropriate and actively searching male.

18 Informal sector jobs are extremely wide-spread in Egypt. It is estimated that about 40% of the economic activity is accounted for by the informal sector (Saif 2013, para. 1).This also means that those working in the informal sector have no social security, health insurance, or recourse to labor rights.

Armbrust describes his films as "unsurpassed not only in laying bare thorny issues of sexuality, but in doing so largely within the conventions of commercial cinema" (Armbrust 1998: 31). Armbrust focuses on how men and women's sexuality is controlled and contained in films by al-Tayyib, mainly by an autocratic regime, a conservative society or personal status laws that are applied by too diligent officials.

I will not look at sexuality in se, but rather how the anti-hero's masculinity is constructed, whether in terms of his work, his sexual identity, and his family. Al-Tayyib's films largely partake in the conventions of commercial cinema by using for example famous actors and actresses. But this element is but one of the reasons. His films mainly follow straightforward narratives with the usual 'unlikely' string of events, using melodrama to convey emotions and elicit the audience's sympathy for the anti-heroes. But he also applies the 'codes of modernity', juxtaposing modernity and traditions, whether positively or negatively. This juxtaposition usually takes place in the modern city, which plays an important role in al-Tayyib's films. It is, however, a dark side of the city as the setting where his characters live, work, eat and love. The film *The Bus Driver* is a good example of a film incorporating these topics, set within the corrupting surroundings of the contemporary city. But it remains an unknown city in the film; although the anti-hero moves around between Cairo, Port Said and Damietta, there are never really clear markers or famous landmarks – the city is an abstract and distant place. All three cities look rather similar, its streets and quarters not distinctive. New-realist directors Muhammad Khan and Bashir al-Dik wrote the film script; this group of directors (it also included Dawud 'Abd al-Sayyid, Khayri Bishara, 'Ali Badrakhan and Ra'fat al-Mihi; Abu Shadi 1998: 25) regularly assisted each other in writing the script, acting in the film or in another way contributing to it.

In the film *The Bus Driver* we find Hasan (Nur al-Sharif), a middle-aged man working three jobs: a bus driver in the early morning, taxi driver in the afternoon, and occasionally helping out his father in the latter's wood factory. He does not have a lot of money to offer his family a life of luxury, but they are happy. His wife Mirvat (played by

Mirvat Amin) loves him and money is no issue for her. Mirvat's materialist mother (played by Zahra al-'Ula, famous for her roles as aristocratic and/or arrogant woman), however, has always opposed her daughter's marriage with Hasan, considering he barely has money to buy her gifts or to get a decent flat. The class difference between Mirvat and Hasan is quite big; Mirvat's family is relatively rich which explains their opposition towards Hasan. Their luxurious flat stands in great contrast to Hasan's flat or his family's dwellings. The crisis starts when Hasan is informed that his father (played by the tragic 'Imad Hamdi) is about to lose his factory due to unpaid taxes. It is only then that the audience is informed that Hasan is a war veteran, perhaps to strengthen the audience's empathy with the sad character and to link the film's characters directly to political events in the country and the region and to the defeated men-motif of earlier films. As war veterans they were lauded and welcomed after the war for the victory of the Egyptian army. In real life, they were unable to bear the fruits of this victory.

Hasan is a good example of the underdog male; everyone seems to be against him, no recourse to any support except for his friends and in the end he is deprived of his sole purpose – his father and his family. The city he lives in and his work are rife with crime; on a daily basis he is confronted with a robbery on his crowded bus and during a nightly ride in his taxi he himself is the victim of armed robbery – committed by university students we learn later. The film is thus typical for a post-*infitāḥ* Egypt where money talks and education is no guarantee for the future, hence the student-robbers. The film furthermore conspicuously sides with the working classes and not with the middle classes – now turned materialist – that had continued to occupy the white screen in previous eras. Hasan's mother-in-law and brothers-in-law are all examples of that new ethic too, with their focus on money and disregard for their family. This does not necessarily make the film a conservative display of family values; on the contrary, the nucleus family is no longer deified but problematized in the film's critique of a bourgeois ideology.

The presence of family in these films is often the source of a crisis, considering the requirement for young men to provide for their

younger siblings and elder parents in an economy that had become increasingly competitive. The problematic family is a returning trope in films from this era, but also earlier films occasionally problematized the family as a support structure.[19] While the crisis originated from an abstract and distant crisis in ideology, government or politics in the previous decades, in the 1980s the crisis has literally been familiarized and has entered the personal sphere of the male anti-hero in a very tangible form. The film's focus on Hasan's crisis and quest for money (for a good cause!) makes the viewer empathize with the anti-hero, even though his wife makes legitimate claims too. She wants a husband who is available for her, not someone who is only working to provide for them, critiquing Hasan's way of defining his masculine identity through his work.[20] Al-Tayyib's world is a paradoxical one; the characters' sole recourse to safety is the family which is at the same time not at all supportive.

Hasan's masculinity is fundamental for the film's narrative. His masculine identity is centered on his conviction that he is the sole breadwinner. As soon as his father informs him of the impending bankruptcy, he takes it upon him to find a solution. His elder father is no longer able to do so, while he is the man's only son among four girls. He then visits his brother-in-law 'Awni, who works together with his father in the wood-factory. As the responsible for the factory's finances, Hasan would like to know what has happened. Before he enters, the camera gives an overview of the living room where 'Awni

19 Salah Abu Sayf's film *Bidaya wa Nihaya/Dead Among the Living* (1960) is a painful example of this. In the film, the daughter of a poor family has to take responsibility for her younger, studying, brother after their father dies. The elder brother has found a new life in crime and women, but the younger has ambitious plans. The film does not end well when the younger finds out his sister had sold her body to provide for his studies. He kills her by forcing her to jump of a bridge, but a bit later jumps in the water as well, remorseful of his deeds. Contrary to most films of the era, this film's fatalism is relatively odd, ending so abruptly and negatively.

20 Muhammad Khan's film *Zawgit Ragul Muhimm/Wife of an Important Man* (1988), also with Mirvat Amin, is another beautiful example of a man (played by Ahmad Zaki) defining his masculinity through his work and his standing in society. As a police investigator, his position demands respect from those around him. When he loses his job, he perceives it as a loss of identity and personality.

and Hasan's sister Khadiga are eating through a medium shot. It immediately strikes us that their house is not too fancy, in contrast to the amount of food on the table for only two people. When Hasan rings the bell his sister opens the door. The camera pans to the right, following Khadiga to the door and giving an overview of the rest of the room: simple decoration, a couch under a closed window, and Khadiga's sewing machine, all cramped together in this one small room. These details are important to understand that they do seem to have some money aiming for a middle class lifestyle (for example the rather large dinner on the table, and a simple, yet clean apartment), they are definitely not of the richest and are originally a working class family.

Up until now the camera has only offered us medium shots to include the surroundings of the characters, but as soon as Hasan and 'Awni sit down in the latter's 'salon',[21] the camera cuts to a close-up of Hasan's face, his piercing eyes scrutinizing his brother-in-law. He would like to know what had happened to the factory's profit, considering they haven't paid any taxes for the past decade. According to him, the factory owners he knows "have all built blocks of flats and drive Mercedes." Hasan's remark echoes the modernist tenets of progress and social mobility as they were depicted in the 50s and 60s. In this cinematic context of the disruption of middle class ideals (Armbrust 1995: 105), progress and social mobility is the outcome for a lucky few while the middle class is hollowed out. The camera then cuts to a close up of 'Awni, lighting his cigarette apathetically before answering: "You forgot about your sisters' weddings, and the costs of mine and your father's house?" Although Hasan does not trust him, he is in no position to blame 'Awni of anything at this point. Then the escalating dialogue is paused when a medium shot shows 'Awni standing up and walking towards the camera. But Hasan follows him, picking up the dialogue and threatening him. From 'Awni's evading looks, continuously walking away from Hasan towards the receding

21 The 'salon' is a reception room for guests usually with more expensive furniture, typical in Egyptian middle and upper class houses, similar to the Ottoman palaces' *salamlik* where visitors were welcomed though with stricter gender segregation at that time.

camera, we clearly understand that Hasan is telling him the truth, and that 'Awni's less than honorable business practices have been exposed.

The same techniques are used when he visits his other sisters: as soon as he enters the house, several medium and long shots allow us to take in the décor of the house, pointing at their presumed wealth that increases with each sister he visits. Compared to the rundown flat of Hasan's father (including broken, unrepaired windows and flaking paint), his sisters' dwellings are all examples of their lifestyles. His sister in Port Said – home to a duty-free port – has a house stacked with consumer goods. To cap it all, she offers him a can of Pepsi, symbolizing their love for Western consumer goods. This excessive lifestyle is continued when her husband and sons return and they eat an expensive dinner consisting of fish and scampi, a can of Pepsi for each, and a bottle of wine. The close-up of his brother-in-law filling Hasan's cup to the brim – and then some more, spilling on the table – emphasizes their consumerist lifestyle; they have enough money, but no style. His third sister's family is even richer, and their pretentious religiosity and nouveau riche morality does not compel them to help out Hasan's father, either. This escalating exposé of each family's wealth fits Viola Shafik's assertion of a 'fat cats myth' (Shafik 2007: 275-80), informed by a middle class angst for lower classes climbing the social ladder without the cultural capital of the 'old' middle and upper classes. As she argues, this myth is widely exaggerated in films of this era, ignoring the dire social conditions that Egypt's lower classes live in and the difficulties they face in actually improving their economic position.

Hasan – according to 'Awni – went 'begging for money' with his family, but returned unsuccessfully. Hasan's masculinity, however, does not allow him to accept assistance from his wife, Mirvat, who was prepared to work outside the home. Hasan cannot adapt to this 'new' idea and even hits her, causing her to leave and her mother angered because *a bus driver* has slapped her daughter.[22] Why is he unable to

22 Not the fact that he slapped her, but his lower rank and status in the eyes of the mother did not qualify him to slap her or control her daughter's life. The class difference between the two families is as such once again emphasized.

accept financial support from his (wealthier) wife? Hasan does not strike us as an overtly traditionalist person and he and his family are obviously in need of money. Yet, he is unable to deal with his wife's ambition, who, according to him, might neglect her duties inside the home. For his idea of masculinity, composed of him being the sole breadwinner, it is inconceivable to accept that his wife takes on a part of his male role as provider, betraying his dominant middle class values. According to him the fate of his family depends on his work outside the home, supported by his wife's work inside the home.

Hasan's masculinity is thus constructed around a set of elements, as provider of the family, but also the protector of his family and, with extension, the nation – as a war veteran – which he did successfully, considering the official rhetoric of the victory in the war of '73. His working-class mentality collides with his wife's family's middle class values. Eventually, his masculinity will prove to be unable to solve the issue, as he will lose everything: his wife, his father, the factory, as well as his taxi. His entire identity, as provider and protector, is destroyed at the end, resulting in an existential crisis with which the film dramatically ends. His masculine performance, defined in terms of his ability to provide, protect and procreate, is inadequate. Hasan Haddad notes that Hasan's and his friends' masculine identity is defined by their shared "moments of heroism and defeat, while authentic elements like masculinity (*rujūla*) and gallantry (*shahāma*)[23] brought them together" (2013: 18). The quote points at the 'authenticity' of masculinity, in terms of the high values that were supposed to be visualized by *fatwana*. In earlier (pre-1967) films, the modernist rhetoric allowed for a successful performance of this masculinity. In this and other films of the era – namely after the '67 defeat – the same terminology defines the men's masculinity, but they are no longer

23 Peterson (2011), referring to El-Messiri and Wassef, describes *shahāma* in terms of gallantry, but also as "a self-possession bordering on audacity, which reveals a noble character" (Peterson 2011: 106). He continues, saying that "it is not only an individual characteristic but is linked to social order." In this way, it might also result in male domination over women's behavior and freedom of movement, as Peterson exemplifies. Hasan Haddad's remark points at an understanding of *shahāma* in terms of the men's shared experiences, comforting as well as protecting each other.

capable of successfully performing it. The quote also shows the positive connotations that are made with *rujūla* or masculinity/manliness, as a set of positively coded values. Haddad thus does not understand it as a gender identity, but as a fixed value system to which we can and should subscribe in the performance of our gendered identities.

7.2.2 The Kidnapped Girl

The director of *The Kidnapped Girl* (1987), Sharif Yahya (1951/55-2003), has not made a lot of films, his career cut short after he lost the battle against cancer. He has made several TV-films, among the few other action-films he directed for cinematic release. He is the younger brother of director Ahmad Yahya, whom he regularly cooperated with in the latter's films. The film *The Kidnapped Girl* is perhaps not one of the most famous films of the era, although it features the immensely popular star actor Ahmad Zaki (1949-2005), as well as the famous actors Kamal al-Shinawi (see *Karnak Café*, chapter 6), and the actresses Layla 'Ilwi (1962-) and Amina Rizq, the 'mother of Egyptian cinema' (1910-2003).

Ahmad Zaki, known as 'The Dark Boy of the Screen' (*fatā al-shāsha al-asmar*) because of his tanned complexion, is the most lauded and loved actor of the 80s and 90s. His performances in 'Ali Badrakhan's film *Shafiqa wa-Mitwalli/Shafika and Metwalli* (1978) and Youssef Chahine's *Iskandiriyya Leh?/Alexandria... Why?* (1978) made him instantly famous. He was a talented actor, acting in comedies, action films and dramas with the same conviction and credibility. He took on roles as *Ṣa'īdi* boys and men (*al-Bari'/The Innocent*, 'Atif al-Tayyib 1986), educated middle class Cairenes (*al-'Awwama Raqm 70/Houseboat Number 70*, Khayri Bishara), police officers (see footnote 20 above), 'ordinary' white collar employees (*al-Hubb Fawq Hadbat al-Haram/Love on Top of the Pyramid Plateau*, 'Atif al-Tayyib 1986), working class men (*Kaburiyya/Crab*, Khayri Bishara 1990), and doormen (*al-Beh al-Bawwab/Mister Doorman*, Hasan Ibrahim 1987). He acted in several films where his masculine identity plays an essential part in the plot, for example in *Istakoza/Lobster* (1996) a film by female director Inas al-Daghaydi. In the film, a woman, who had nearly castrated his

character, is forced to marry him for the period of one month in order to care for him until his 'masculinity' (the term *rugūla* is used in the film, although they mean the proper functioning of his male sexual organ) is restored. Amina Rizq plays the woman's great aunt, the family's matriarch who agrees to the scheme, secretly hoping that the emasculated man will be able to turn the too masculine girl into a "proper lady".[24]

The film *The Kidnapped Girl* uses a similar style as *The Bus Driver*, displaying similar topics and issues: a working class man (Husayn, played by Ahmad Zaki), a family that depends on him after the death of his father, a sick mother (the ensuing crisis), class differences, and a taxi (and thus also the streets and the city as the décor). Husayn's taxi is the family's sole livelihood, which is completely ruined in an accident caused by an inattentive girl. Husayn – knowing the disastrous consequences of losing his taxi – by accident slaps the girl (hence the quote in the title for this part of the chapter), unable to retain his anger and feelings.[25] In order to get money for a new taxi, he is then convinced by his friends to kidnap the girl since the law will not help a poor man like Husayn and on the contrary will side with the rich Ratib Bey Barakat (played by Kamal al-Shinawi), father of the girl.

Once again, the film uses similar 'codes of modernity' in its portrayal of Husayn and the *othering* of the rich girl and her family. This is done from the beginning of the film. The sympathetic Husayn, singing Arabic songs in his simple taxi, waving his happy customers goodbye, is in a good mood. The film then cuts to the girl in her expensive Mercedes, listening to foreign music. She is immediately distanced from the audience through this simple sound technique and

24 The plot is based on Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, a play that has been adapted several times into films in Egyptian cinema. An older example is Fatin 'Abd al-Wahhab's *Ah Min Hawa'/Oh Eve!* from 1962 with Lubna 'Abd al-'Aziz in the role of 'the shrew' and Rushdi Abaza in the role of doctor Hasan, or Petruchio in the original play.

25 Similar to *The Bus Driver*, Husayn's slapping a girl is not the main issue in the film; the problem arises only from the class difference between the man and the woman. The lack of critical stances toward violence against women in Egyptian cinema – at times portrayed as a male's 'educative' slap as in these two films – is striking (pun intended).

her 'un-Egyptian' attitude and culture.[26] After the accident and slapping the girl, Husayn tries hard to get things right, but the lonely man is no match for the financial and physical power of the girl's father and his gang (comprised of lawyers and unlawful bullies). Thus, when he decides to kidnap the girl on ill advice from his friend, we cannot but empathize with him: he is an unfortunate young man and 'victimized' by an unjust society. Even his victim sympathizes with him briefly during the kidnapping, particularly after he saves her from his friend who tried to rape her.

The redemption of his actions is complete because of the film's siding with Husayn. The dramatic narrative features – the accident, a sick mother, a sloppy legal system, his marginalized position – place the man into an outsider position. He symbolizes the growing disparity in Egyptian society between the upper classes, embodied by Ratib Bey,[27] and the working and middle classes, embodied by Husayn. But the modernist synthesizing ideology had been in decline since the 70s to the same extent as the middle classes were diminishing (Armbrust 1995). The film goes to great lengths to depict Husayn as the victim of this class divide and the country's adoption of a Western imposed economic system of the free market and privatization. When Husayn's mother gets sick, she is forced to go to a private hospital where the costs for the operation are massive compared to the (supposedly) free government hospitals. Unable to pay for her treatment, she dies, convincing Husayn to forcefully take what is his.

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26 These foreign elements come back in many Egyptian films, and since its very beginning, in order to distance viewers from certain characters (Armbrust 1995: 107). Similar to the foreign consumer goods and the Pepsi can in *The Bus Driver*, the foreign English-language music is here associated with money, corruption, arrogance and a non-Egyptian identity.

27 It is interesting to note here that Ratib Barakat is constantly addressed by Husayn as well as Ratib's assistants as 'bey', an old Ottoman title which was in monarchical Egypt also one of the higher administrative titles. This return to pre-1952 titles (including the term *bāshā/pasha*) is another example of the post-70s films' critical stance towards modernist rhetoric of equality and revolutionary social change. These terms have never really been abolished, used to express someon respectfully, but they nevertheless are not entirely void of their historical meaning of inequality (and oppression).

To emphasize the differences between Husayn's and Ratib's background and class, the film contrasts both men's dwellings and work area: Husayn lives in a simple, small apartment with his mother and siblings, while Ratib lives in a luxurious villa. Ratib works in a fancy high-rise on the banks of the Nile, symbol of capitalism, Husayn works in the streets, driving a taxi, the marginalized side-effect of unbridled capitalism. The differences between the two classes also extend to their lifestyles. Husayn's family is rather easy-going when it comes to 'propriety', for example when his sister's long-time fiancé asks him to agree with a quick, inexpensive marriage ceremony because he had found work abroad and intends to travel with her. Ratib on the other hand is only interested in a good match for his daughter Nevine in financial terms and thus does not allow her to choose her suitor but agrees himself with the father of the future fiancé. Their marriage will not be one of love, but one of convenience. Compared to earlier films, in which love marriages were always the ideal, the marriages in this film have lost their romantic appeal. Husayn's sister is unable to marry because there is practically no money for the wedding, while Nevine is refused any input whatsoever.

The film brings to mind Nystrom's argument about 1970s American cinema in which class depictions – and particularly depictions of the white working class male – have become so crucial for those filmmakers' "rendering of the social world" (Nystrom 2009: x). His example of Scorcese's *Taxi Driver* (1976) can be partly extended to this film as well. The Egyptian filmmaker's rendering of lower classes as tightly knit families, looking out for each other, with the working class male inclined to violence, is visualized in *The Kidnapped Girl*, betraying the filmmaker's middle class view on social relations in an increasingly dichotomized Egypt. Dai Xiaoqi (2012) argues that the decline of the middle classes resulted in a "'dumbbell' shaped Egypt" (id. 70-1). This dumbbell shape meant a relatively growing upper class, as well as an exponentially expanding lower class, with a small number of middle class lingering somewhere in between. The upper and lower classes are represented in this film, while the middle class absence is then actually embodied by the camera and the narrative, applying a plot development reminiscent of Shafik's argument of the 'fat cats myth'.

Through the narrative's use of the codes of modernity in a contrasting rather than a synthesizing manner, the modernist, middle class ideals of pre-70s films are strangled between the two extremes, yet, they have not lost their appeal as idealized norms and values.

7.3 Discussion

The masculinity of *futuwwa*, which is constructed through all kinds of chivalrous characteristics based on physical strength and codes of honor, is not possible for the antiheroes of the 80s because presently physical strength is no longer a guarantee, which it was in the past, according to these films. These films – and similar to the *futuwwa* – consider masculinity as a set of actions and values supposedly emanating from men's bodies, which men are no longer able to *perform*, and therefore they cannot *be* men anymore. This leads to two sets of problems. First, this requires an understanding of masculinity in essentialist terms, as a fixed set of actions and characteristics, ahistorical and unchanging. We know now, however, that masculinity and how we understand it *today* is a changing historical and social construct, depending on place and time. Second, this also includes the assumption that the present conditions are detrimental to men –whose dominance is never questioned – in the first place, and to 'others' – women and children – in the second place. Another element that defines all the men's lives (from the historical and heroicized *futuwwa* to the contemporary antihero) is their work. We have seen that in all the films, work has proven to be essential to the construction of their masculine identities. They take pride in it, and without it they fear they will lose part of their masculine identity.

Can we call this then a continuation of the men-in-crisis discourse? As pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, the country was in need of calm after the tumultuous years of socialist and then liberal-capitalist policies. The country went from one upheaval to the next, entering wars that were devastating and expensive. It was 'obvious' for many that Egypt was in crisis. With the growing inequality in the country, the crisis was very tangibly for most people (the diminishing purchasing power of the middle class and expending lower classes).

Debby Phillips (referring to Kimmel) notes that during times of transition and instability, "the search for a timeless and eternal inner essence of manhood becomes most urgent" (Phillips 2006: 405). This might explain the emergence of the *futuwwa*-films metaphorically portraying idealized versions of masculinity, the gallant and chivalrous strongmen restoring stability and social equality.

The antihero, too, portrays a similar inner essence of masculinity, looking for ways to perform adequately as a man. The anti-heroes of these two films construct their masculine identity through 'classic' elements like the male breadwinner, responsible for the family's wellbeing in all its facets. Both Hasan and Husayn are underdog men, trying to cope with the ensuing crisis in their respective families and lives. The crisis from without is experienced by these men as a crisis from within when they realize they will be unable to solve the problems they face. The films discussed here focus on the crisis as it is experienced by men, portrayed as morally superior characters to their antagonists, whether family, women, or the rich in general. These films' emphasis on the crisis as a man-only issue, threatening his 'proper' masculine performance (either as breadwinner, protector of the family, or father-figure), contribute to the wider discourse of men in crisis. In the next chapter we will discuss how this perceived crisis affects the portrayal of men and masculinities in the most recent productions of the 2000s.

8. Rebel Masculinities, Revolution and New Patterns of Paternalism

By the end of the 90s and specifically in the decade running up to the 2011 revolution, films discussed the untenable political, social, and economic situation that many middle and lower class Egyptians were experiencing.[1] But this does not mean that all films are therefore revolutionary – either in style or topic; some films might even contain a reactionary agenda. Armbrust (2012) notes how one 2008 film (*Rami al-I'tisami/Rami the Protestor*, Sami Rafi') portrays demonstrations in a negative light. "The vision of Egypt promoted in *Rami*", Armbrust continues, "is depressing for anyone who hopes to see a revolutionary outcome in which social and economic justice prevail" (Armbrust 2012: 148). The films from the past decade are once again topical and timely for the period in which they are made. In terms of gender representations, we will see how two very distinct types of masculine identities are portrayed; two types that reveal the prominent politics of gender in Mubarak's last decade.

The films from this decade come after a period that saw the development of new discourses, as well as new cinematic styles in what Malek Khouri (2005) calls *New Arab Cinema*. Khouri argues that since the end of the 90s new developments were visible in Arab cinemas, including diaspora films made by Arab filmmakers abroad, often for non-Arabic speaking audiences. Of interest here are the different subjects Khouri discerns in the films from this period, one of them being a new discourse on gender and sexuality. Khouri is interested in the new discourses on female sexuality as well as non-heteronormative sexualities trying to break free from patriarchal

1 The death of the middle class in cultural products has been extensively discussed by Armbrust (1995, 1996). Xiaoqi (2012) notes the demise of the middle classes in Egypt, with a growing upper-class and vastly expanding lower classes, as discussed in chapter 7. The growing disparity between Egypt's social classes remains also a central topic in many films from the current period.

domination. But I would like to add to this a number of films that question and problematize male heteronormative sexuality. The film *al-Na'ama wa-'l-Tawus/The Ostrich and the Peacock* (Muhammad Salah Abu Sayf 2002) is a film that depicts a man who lacks in sexual performance, yet is too proud to admit it (the symbolic peacock), while his wife denies her traumatic experiences with her body when she was a child (the symbolic ostrich). The film criticizes common misconceptions of a man's and a woman's body and sexuality in Egypt and tries to overcome the taboo of talking about sexual problems within the context of marriage.

In the previous chapter I have briefly mentioned Khayri Bishara's film *The Necklace and the Bracelet* (1986). It is one of the first films to openly portray a *Ṣa'īdī* man's impotence and his inability to properly perform his masculinity, a taboo subject even to this day. The last decades and particularly from the 70s onward, we have seen that masculine identity is increasingly portrayed as being in a perpetual crisis, similar to the country's (and the Egyptian film industry's) continuing crisis.[2] That crisis had thus reached unsustainable levels in the past decade, as evidenced by the continuous 'down-grading' of male characters in films: the turn of the millennium saw the emergence of 'the age of the *baltagi*'[3] and the lower class unemployed

2 John MacInnes (1998: 11) argues that masculinity has somehow always been in crisis from the moment it came into the picture and its normativity came under scrutiny. However, masculine normativity is not questioned in popular films from Egypt; its normativity is adapted and restored. Nevertheless, we can discern an increasingly critical stance toward masculine identities, and more diversity is visible thanks to contributions from female directors and screenwriters, but also critical male directors such as Muhammad Khan and his recent film *Fatat al-Masna'/Factory Girl* (2014).

3 The correct transliteration of the word is *balṭagī*, an Arabic word from Turkish origin (*balta*, meaning ax). For the sake of convenience, I have chosen for a basic transliteration. The word *baltagi* is now commonly used to describe lowlifes, often from popular, crowded and poor neighborhoods. Particularly since 2011 the word is also used to describe anti-regime protesters (and thugs) or pro-regime supporters (and thugs) by each opposing faction. It has also come into use to denounce anyone whose actions are not deemed 'appropriate'. To cover the entire social meaning of the word in its present setting, I will use the Arabic *baltagi* and not its less explicative translation. The *baltagi* is understood here to describe a lower class, often unemployed, male,

male. But a discourse of crisis (whether an economic, political or social crisis, or a crisis in masculinity) also points at a need for stability that Mubarak's presidency initially seemed to propose (Osman 2010: 166). Hegemonic masculinity came to be defined in terms of stability and control, an eternal masculine ideal authorized to make sense of the chaos surrounding us through its paternalism.

This masculine ideal was embodied by the *futuwwa* in the 80s, although those films – as we have seen in the previous chapter – also portrayed men realistically, with all their flaws. Nevertheless, the tone was set for a return to a patriarchal masculinity and apparent rule of *man*. This does not mean, however, that all the films produced from this era unequivocally portray men and masculinity in a unilateral manner. Indeed, such films as Muhammad Amin's *Film Thaqafi/A Cultural Film* (2000), Hani Khalifa's *Sahar al-Layali/Long Nights* (2003) or Dawud 'Abd al-Sayyid's *Rasa'il al-Bahr/Messages from the Sea* (2010) portray different men and their struggles to come to terms with their respective masculine identities. Much relates to these films' genres, as comedies or melodramas, contrary to the action film 'criminal hero' that the *baltagi* portrays.

In the anti-modernist films from the 70s onward we saw the critical assessment of the family in the individual's life. The problem arose when men were no longer able or felt restrained by the roles they were expected to adhere to. The problematic family – as origin of crisis – developed further in the 80s and also in the most recent decades it continued to be presented as a limitation on the development of masculine identities. Men somehow have to adapt to family life; it is not what they are 'naturally' inclined to do, at least not in popular culture, but marriage and fathering children nevertheless remains the dominant ideal. In her analysis of contemporary Arab literature, Samia Mehrez notes that "dominant cultural representations continue to reinforce traditional values of the family and moralize its reality" (Mehrez 2008: 123). Men in the Arab world, too, negotiate their

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and occasionally involved in criminal activities, such as drugs, theft and murder. I need to point out as well that the actual word was not commonly used until 2011, when the protests erupted. The word only gained prominence in films after 2011. The type (as a common thug) already existed well before that year, however.

masculine identities within the constraints of patriarchy and the institution of marriage. Homa Hoodfar argues that "through marriage and having children [...] adulthood and self-realization are achieved" (Hoodfar 2009: 262) for both men and women. Nevertheless, some popular films portray men as 'settling down' when starting a family, while women are portrayed as naturally ensuring their expected social position.

Simultaneously, the dominant ideal of family life as the ultimate goal is represented in popular culture as a generational conflict. The struggle to break free from patriarchal bonds is an old theme in Egyptian cinema ever since its early beginnings. Walter Armbrust, in his discussion on sex on the silver screen in Egypt, shows that "[f]ilm narratives commonly articulate conceptual extremes of both patriarchal control and individualized love rather than real life situations" (Armbrust 1998: 29). The generational conflict is closely linked to gender and the individuals' struggles for constructing their (gendered) selves. Young men and women come into conflict with patriarchal figures, representing older generations. Nevertheless, the family ideal is always restored. From the films discussed in this chapter it will become clear in what way generational conflicts and gender struggles are informed by class and heteronormativity.

8.1 Rebel Masculinities

"Masculinity means manners, not shaking your shoulders"
(*Principal Saladin*, Sharif 'Arafa)

In the first part of this chapter I will discuss a specific type of men, the young, unemployed male. Occasionally, and specifically more recently since 2011, the word *baltagi* is used. Characters similar to the *baltagi* have a long history in Egyptian cinema, but have only recently been described as such. *Balṭaga* (its verbal noun) are actions that can be described as thuggery, whether in violent, physical terms or as economic thuggery. As such, Farid Shawqi's performance in *The Tough Guy* could be described as a *baltagi* rather than the more honorable,

chivalrous denunciation of the ideal that the *futuwwa* is supposed to be (as represented in 80s *futuwwa*-films). Shawqi's character both physically and economically controls the other traders in the market place through his *balṭaga*, although he is not exactly participating in criminal activities (if one does not count the numerous bribes). Also 'Adil Adham's performance as *ma'allim* al-Shibli in *The Devil Preaches*, which was discussed in the previous chapter, could now be described as *baltagi*. Adham's character is more visibly criminal, as a violent rapist and murderer. From the 70s onward, cinematic *balṭaga* focused primarily on economic thuggery with occasional 'violent' diversions like the antagonists in the *futuwwa*-films of the 80s. In the years since the new millennium the *baltagi* has become the foremost lower class male type in popular Egyptian films together with stereotypical representations for women as prostitutes and dancers.

These continuing exploitative representational politics of popular and lower class neighborhoods are reminiscent of this most recent period, characterized by police brutality and political oppression. Male (but also female) identities are constructed around this ambiguous criminalization of popular lower class neighborhoods. It would be too naïve to deny any criminal activity taking place in lower class areas, but these areas' continued criminalization in popular culture and media affirms the official rhetoric of 'dangerous' *'ashwā'iyyāt* (informal settlements)[4] that need to be controlled at any cost. These generalizing representations result in a stigmatization of a large number of the population, of whole areas within the city, and of specific, marginalized classes.[5] Poverty almost automatically leads to

4 The lower class neighborhoods that are described here are the new and informal settlements or *'ashwā'iyyāt* that have sprouted around the city. They have to be distinguished from historical working class neighborhoods like Bulaq, Sayyida Zaynab, and others which are situated right in the center of the city and part of its historical areas. The *'ashwā'iyyāt* are the informal "haphazard" (lit. translation of *'ashwā'ī*) settlements built from the 80s onward at the edges of the town and which are now starting to be integrated in the greater urban areas of (mainly) Cairo and Giza.

5 In this regard I refer to Armbrust's article titled "Dreaming of Counterrevolution" (2012), in which he analyzes a 2008 film, *Rami the Protester*. Armbrust argues that the film unites poverty and criminality within *'ashwā'ī* neighborhoods (id. 147), what the films discussed in this chapter also seem to

criminality in these films – notwithstanding the occasional (naïve) 'good guy'. The good guys are almost always depicted as lesser men, unable to survive in the selfish, each-on-his-own neighborhoods. The good men could be disabled, as unknowing victims of their surroundings, or they could be naïve and cowardly, simply trying to cope with the hardships of daily life. The 'real' men, on the other hand, are those who perform their tough guy masculinity successfully.[6]

The main films analyzed in this part of the chapter have a few elements in common. Their décor is set in popular neighborhoods, whether portrayed comically or realistically, and they talk about themes like drug abuse and unemployment. The prominent male type in these films is the rebellious, young male, although the men's performances differ depending on the film's genre. The action films take themselves seriously, to the point of irony. The irony lies in the fact that these action films portray the muscular male body with great detail and emphasize its strength and ability, but also its beauty. These ambiguous portrayals of male bodies put them in a feminized position as desirable objects, although their actions and point of view require them to be in an active position of male control. The comedies make a joke of the tough guy masculinity in lower class areas (similar to the decades-old comedies comically depicting the *ma'allim*'s tough guy masculinity), and might transgress assumptions of generic portrayals of class and gender. But laughter can also function to emphasize stereotypical representations and infantilize the inhabitants of lower class neighborhoods.

8.1.1 Al-Limbi *and masculinity in disguise*

The first film in this part about lower class masculine performances is *al-Limbi* (Wa'il Ihsan 2002), with star actor Muhammad Sa'd (1968-), which was a successful attempt to give the contemporary lower class

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be doing.

6 A notable exception is the popular actor Karim 'Abd al-'Aziz who portrays lower class men more positively, as *ibn al-balad* (el-Messiri 1978: 54), defined in terms of his wit, honesty and courage. Yet, his teaming-up with popular actress Muna Zaki in the film *Abu 'Ali* (Ahmad Nadir Galal 2005), in which she plays the role of an upper-middle class woman, downplays the stark class differences that constitute Egypt's social reality.

unemployed male a central role in Egyptian films. It is a comedy which is not immediately the most 'masculine' of genres (though often associated with men as comedians), considering the continuous ridiculing of ubiquitous masculinity in many comedies.[7] Particularly the 'apex of masculinity',[8] the mustache, is often central in jokes about the manliness of men donning it. The mustache could be read as symbolizing the penis, its presence central to the construction of a masculine identity. The removal of the mustache could be understood as castration in this sense. In each of the chapters and eras in this study, there was a reference to the masculine sign that the mustache can be, not to mention the emasculation one suffers when his mustache is shaven. This will be particularly prevalent in chapter 9, in the discussion of the film *'Afwan Ayyuha al-Qanun/Pardon Me, Law!* by Inas al-Daghaydi (1985).

The main character of the present film, *al-Limbi*, juxtaposes lavish facial hair to non-masculine behavior. Muhammad Sa'd's characters do this in all of his films, considering his attention to different and remarkable sorts of facial hair for each of his types. Yet, non-masculine behavior is what defines the actor's famous type. The quote at the beginning of this subchapter is taken from an earlier film, *al-Nazir Salah al-Din/Principal Saladin* (Sharif 'Arafa 2000); the film's title is a play of words on Youssef Chahine's famous 1963 epic *al-Nasir Salah al-Din/ Saladin the Victorious*. In the former film, Muhammad Sa'd appeared for the first time with his trademark al-Limbi character. In it, he tries to teach one of his former classmates ('Ashur Salah al-Din, played by another famous comedy actor, 'Ala' Wali al-Din, 1963-2003) how to toughen up. One of al-Limbi's classes entails a course in 'masculinity': *ir-rugūla adab, mish hizz kitāf* (masculinity means manners, not shaking your shoulders), meaning that true masculinity is not limited to muscles and showing off, but is comprised of more

7 Stuart Hall (1981: 228) argues that, when studying popular culture, we should keep in mind its contradictions: "the double movement of containment and resistance". As such, the comedy can here simultaneously reinforce and contain common perceptions of what constitutes masculine performances, as well as ridicule and resist them.
8 In Sa'd's film *Katkut/Chick* (Ahmad 'Awad 2006) the main character Katkut calls his mustache *rās al-rujūla*, the apex of masculinity.

noble characteristics as described in the chapter on the *futuwwa*. Confronting al-Limbi's words with his deeds reveals his understanding of masculinity, but his inability to appropriately act upon it.

The present film's director is Wa'il Ihsan (1964-), known for his comedies with popular comedy actors like Muhammad Sa'd, Muhammad Hanaydi and the octogenarian Hasan Husni. Critics in Egypt often scorn the director's commercial products, denouncing them as simple entertainment and referring to them as "shopping mall films" (Shafik 2007: 290-1). Mahmud Qasim's critique of one of his films, *Zaki Shan/Zaki Chan* (2005), a word play on Jackie Chan's action star persona, is extremely negative, although he does not say why, apart from the film's failed humor (Qasim 2010: 459-60). Yet, it is interesting to note the director's references to other films and film cultures as well as historical figures. The only link to the actual Jackie Chan in *Zaki Chan*, is the main character Zaki's willingness to become a bodyguard, pretending to be an adapt fighter and trying to disentangle himself from the clutches of his domineering father. Whether or not the film's humor is successful is a subjective matter and should not concern us. What is more relevant here is the director's known use of multiple post-modern references to pop culture, history and historical figures.

Similar references to films and historical figures are present in the film *al-Limbi* as well. Viola Shafik notes the nominal reference the character makes to the historical figure of the British field marshal Edmund Allenby (Shafik 2007: 289), although the comparison ends here. Muhammad Sa'd's character is in nothing similar to the British soldier, as an unemployed, marihuana smoking, alcohol drinking 'lowlife'. Al-Limbi's mother is called Faransa, a reference to France, while his best friend is called 'Amm Bakh ('Uncle' Bakh), referring to the Baroque composer Johann Sebastian Bach. Apart from Bakh playing a classical instrument (the violin), there is no clear indication to the reasons behind such names for al-Limbi's friend, or for his mother's name. Another recognizable element in the director's films is his use of coming-of-age stories, which *al-Limbi*'s plot also reminds of.

The actor Muhammad Sa'd continues to spark reactions from critics, although he has lost much of his initial rebellious anti-

establishment attitude for which he was scorned after the release of *al-Limbi*. He often makes references to the classicist cultural icons of the Arab world in his films, as he did in *al-Limbi* when his character performed a popular version of a song by the singer Umm Kulthum. In an interview in the Egyptian state-run newspaper al-Ahram, he rightfully says that it is not he himself who performs the song, but his character, al-Limbi, countering other critics' claims that this scene mutilated Umm Kulthum's song in the context of a "film without content" (Musa 2002). As the actor sees it, al-Limbi's performance takes place in the context of his wedding. Viola Shafik argues that the concept of a singing comedian places him in a long line of famous comedians from the 40s and 50s like Shukuku and Isma'il Yassin (Shafik 2007: 289), making al-Limbi's performance not so out-of-place as some of the critics might claim. The affront they took, however, was with the fact that Umm Kulthum's song – an icon of Egyptian culture to this day – was performed in the mode of a popular *sha'bi* song.

In the same interview with Musa (2002), the actor also sees similarities between his character and himself in earlier years, particularly when he was suffering from the same 'torture', namely unemployment and financial issues, perhaps also referring to his character's drug abuse. Generally, al-Limbi represents for him the 'lost youth', unable to find a job, seeking recourse in drugs. Muhammad Sa'd (from a popular neighborhood himself), embodies a recognizable lower class character, unique amongst the usual clean and 'respectable', slightly elitist productions. By now, Sa'd's comedies have meted out a part for themselves in Egypt's contemporary pop culture but have also grown into parodies of their own genre. In sum, the actor has appeared in four films with this character and promises to give more of the same.

Muhammad Sa'd acts alongside several famous actors, the most famous of them are Hasan Husni (as Bakh) and 'Abla Kamil (as his mother Faransa). 'Abla Kamil (1960-) is famous for her portrayals of mother figures. Although she is only 8 years older than Muhammad Sa'd, his character's infantile behavior allows him to play the son of this slightly older actress. She often portrays the downtrodden, lower class woman and mother, in such films as *Bultiyya al-'Ayma/Swimming*

Bultiyya ('Ali Ragab 2008) and *'Awdat al-Nadla/Return of the Wretch* (Sa'id Hamid 2006). Next to her, we find Hasan Husni (1931-), who acts in more than a dozen films each year as the comedic sidekick to the main actors. Particularly in the last decades of his career he focused on comedies and his role in it as a 'fun' father figure. However, in *al-Limbi*, Husni's character is not the stereotypical father figure one would imagine him to portray: he is more of a good friend, smoking hashish and getting drunk together with al-Limbi, while occasionally getting entirely occupied with a musical intermezzo on his violin.

Muhammad Sa'd's al-Limbi character is a drunk and a drug addict and his films touch upon social issues like youth unemployment, marriage crisis and housing crisis.[9] Although socially relevant and occasionally shocking, he considers his films to be 'clean cinema' (Faruq 2010). The label was applied in the nineties to certain films which avoided the 'hot' topics sex, religion, and politics (Karawya 2010; Mehrez 2008: 203).[10] The actress playing his fiancée in the film is Hala Shiha, a now retired actress. In the late 80s and 90s, many actresses stopped their profession in favor of donning the veil, sometimes to return later, performing a newfound piety in public life (van Nieuwkerk 2013). Hala Shiha has, however, decided not to show herself in public anymore, similar to the famous star actresses of the

9 Egypt's marriage and housing crisis are a decades old policy issue. Nadia Ramsis Farah (2013: 33) notes that already in the 70s a perpetual shortage of housing units struck the country's middle- and lower classes. Also Fahmi and Sutton (2008) discuss the failure of decades of housing policies to provide affordable units for lower and middle income families. The marriage crisis also has a long history, perhaps even longer than the housing crisis. Hanan Kholoussy (2010b) argues that in the early 20th century in Egypt, a marriage crisis due to rising inflation, among other reasons, disabled young bachelors of paying the hefty price of marriage (which includes dowries, an apartment and stable sources of income). A similar economic crisis also forces many youngsters in the 21st century to postpone marriage to a later age – particularly young men, although women in urban centres also suffer from the marriage crisis. Regarding the marriage crisis, see also chapter 7, footnote 17.

10 In a recent publication, Mahmud al-Ghitani (2010) claimed that the name 'clean cinema' has been in use already since the 1950s. Back then, it did not have a 'moral' meaning, but was used to identify those films that had high artistic production standards.

50s through 80s like Shadia (1931-) and Shams al-Barudi (1945-). Other artists who have returned to the screen, albeit with veil, are for example the TV-actress Sabrine (1967-), the cinema star Hanan Turk (1975-) and the singer Shahinaz (1979-).

The film's main character is all but heroic. The original character al-Limbi (in *Principal Saladin*) was a man without family, without work, without a partner and with a speaking disorder, perhaps due to constant alcohol and drug abuse. His character is stereotypical, but he is also sympathetic and for the first time this film put the lower class young unemployed male – the one who was and still is often considered and described in terms of a problem in official rhetoric – on the screen. Salwa Isma'il (2006: xiv) notes how discourses on thuggery (*balṭaga*) reemerged in the 90s culminating in the new 'thuggery law' (*qānūn al-balṭaga*) in 1998. She further argues that public discourse on the newly developed popular areas describing them as 'informal' and *'ashwā'ī* (haphazard) constructs the need for law and order in such areas, condoning state repression. It furthermore neglects the grassroots civilian organization of these areas which are without any recourse to state support (Isma'il 2006: 1-4), while new and planned upper class areas receive a disproportionately large portion of state money, e.g. in the construction of these areas' infrastructure.

Not only official state rhetoric, but also popular culture contributes to the identification of these popular and crowded areas with *balṭaga*. A good example of such criminalization is the recent number of films starring the young actor Muhammad Ramadan (1988-). Although Ramadan has acted the role of a marginalized male in diverse films, including dramas, without stereotypically portraying them as criminals (e.g. *Ihki ya Shahrazad/Tell Me a Story, Shahrazad*, Yusri Nasrallah 2009), he now focuses on that one type, the criminal post-2011 *baltagi*. Yet, his recent films are incredibly popular, in part thanks to his rebellious star persona, and the filmmakers claim to give an insider's view on the 'hidden secrets of the life of *baltagiyya* in Egypt', as it is written on the publicity poster of the 2012 film *al-Almani/The German* ('Ala' al-Sharif).

Isma'il further defines the state's discourses on the lower class areas and unemployed youth as 'politics of security' (Isma'il 2006: 97),

to which Paul Amar also adheres in his analysis of global reactions on the uprisings in 2010-11 (and continuing) in different Arab countries. Amar's focus is on certain state institutions, the so-called security masculinities that create notions of 'dangerous' Arab male subjects (Amar 2011: 40). In addition, there are the paternafare masculinities that promote a rigid form of patriarchal masculinity (and accompanying femininity) within the accepted boundaries of legal marriages. They furthermore criminalize any diverging masculinity or femininity which, according to Amar, eventually leads to the impression that the region is volatile and in need of heavy-handed patriarchs (id. 41). The subversive power that the unmarried, unemployed and able-bodied youths possess is then described in terms of a problem. Particularly the attention on the body of the *baltagiyya* returns in the films, too. This fits within the context of the Egyptian cinema industry, which has always paid a lot of attention to the muscular bodies of the different male types, for example in earlier eras like the 50s *ma'allim* and the 80s *futuwwa*.

Muhammad Sa'd's type is not per sé portrayed as the criminal *baltagi* as the above discussion would suggest, yet he inhabits a similar lower working class neighborhood as the one that Salwa Isma'il studied. Portrayed as a true *ṣāyi'*[11] he adeptly catapults a cigarette between his lips at the start of the film. Then the camera cuts to a close up of his fancy-looking watch which turns out not to be for reading the time, but to light his cigarette with. The attention the subsequent scene gives to his dress and behavior are essential for introducing the character to the audience: his black leather jacket, a bright blue scarf, canary-yellow shirt underneath, and a generally confused look on his face conveying his disturbed character. Then he starts singing a famous modern poem by Muhammad Hafiz Ibrahim,[12] later performed

11 The meaning of *ṣāyi'* can be diverse. On the one hand it could be understood as a good-for-nothing; on the other hand, it can also refer to a person who is very handy and witty in a specific action.

12 Muhammad Hafez Ibrahim is a late 19th, early 20th century Egyptian poet, known for his nationalist poems, of which the one performed in the film is an example. According to Rizzitano (1971: 59), the poet "must be counted among the representatives of the innovating Egyptian poetical school", although Ibrahim's poems "set himself apart [...] by his more spontaneous adherence to

by the singer Umm Kulthum, *Miṣr Tataḥaddath ʻAn Nafsihā* (*Egypt Talks about Itself*). This nationalist song – reminiscent of the great modernist discourse of the 50s and based on a poem from the *Nahḍa* period of socio-cultural renewal – sung by a drunk in a 2002 film, is more than just a parody of that song. Al-Limbi's performance hints at the myth of modernity which Egyptian cinema conveyed in the 50s and 60s, and which was slowly demolished starting from the 1970s, as discussed in previous chapters. But in this post-modern film, filled with empty references to past times and historical figures, it is a message without meaning, a parody of something non-existent in the first place, a pastiche.

His performance reminds us of the failure of the nationalist and modernist rhetoric; although – as Viola Shafik notes – al-Limbi's character continues to represent the dream of social mobility that these modernist messages conveyed (Shafik 2007: 290). Shafik continues, saying that the film could be interpreted "as an emancipation story from the all-devouring mother or father", a recurring topic in some of the director's films as well as a recurring motif in Egyptian cinema. Al-Limbi's mother is a domineering woman, a self-employed woman renting bicycles to the children in the neighborhood, and incredibly cruel to anyone who returns his or her bike late (e.g. hanging them from a nail in her workshop, or hammering their shoes to the wall). Later, al-Limbi is forced to move with his mother to Sharm el-Sheikh to earn money renting bikes to foreigners there. This project fails, and they are forced to return to Cairo. Faransa continues to control her surroundings, though, for example when refusing to pay the rent to Bakh, her landlord. Everyone in the neighborhood fears, but also respects her, thanks to her strong personality. Trying to free himself several times and gain financial independence, al-Limbi is nevertheless assisted by his mother in order to pass his literacy exam in a scene in which he is effectively infantilized. He is dressed up as a school kid, although she also gives him an extra 4 Egyptian pounds pocket money "to get a beer after his exam."

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the cause of the people and the cause of the Arab community in general".

Al-Limbi's masculine performance is not only contained by his infantile behavior, emphasized by his subordinate position vis-à-vis his mother, his problem to find the right words or to pronounce them correctly. His masculinity, a parody of the masculine ideal that *ibn al-balad* (el-Messiri 1978) represents, is also defined by other tactics, including references to homosexuality – whether in the form of gay jokes or cross-dressing – or the actor's putting himself on display on several occasions during the film. The male actor is placed in a female object position, as object of the camera's gaze, for example when he is performing one of his many belly-dance acts. Sa'd's parody of a masculine *ibn al-balad* type reveals the masquerade that his masculine performance eventually is. Judith Butler states that "gender is a repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame" (Butler 1990: 33). Muhammad Sa'd crosses the boundaries of this regulatory frame through his non-masculine performances, i.e. his childish nature, his occasionally gay acts, and the objectification of his body in an act that refutes the notion of an 'original' masculine performance.

Similar to Salwa Isma'il's interviewees (2006), al-Limbi is also seen in encounters with the state, represented by a police officer checking his identity since his looks and behavior seem out of place in the fancy area of the city he is walking through at the start of the film. Soon after he is trying to remember the words and sing the famous poem, he is stopped and frisked by the police. Fearless, or unable, he gives ridiculous answers to the police officer asking him questions about what he is doing there at that nightly hour. The police officer, a representative of the state and hegemonic masculinity defined by power and control, is but one of three encounters with the state. The next one is with the tourist police in Sharm el-Sheikh, stopping al-Limbi and his mother from renting bikes, and the last one is when the infamous *baladiyya* (a municipal police force) destroys his unlicensed liver sandwich cart. If the film can be read as a coming-of-age story, then al-Limbi is the young man who tries to construct his own masculine identity independently from his controlling mother and the patriarchal state institutions that continue to constrain an independent development of his identity. Next to that, through his

parodying every element of the cultural establishment (elitist culture, ruling classes, hegemonic masculinity in the form of state thuggery and male domination) to the point of pastiche in a post-modern context, the film also critiques official culture and rhetoric. The most obvious example is his parody of the song at the start of the film, not to mention his performance later in the film of another Umm Kulthum song, *Hobb Eh?* [*Which Love?*].

There is another trait this type uses as a tool for laughter, namely his cowardice. His words and ideas of what being masculine means are entirely the opposite of his attitude, reinforcing the gender binary between male and non-male (whether female, gay, or being a boy). Reeser (2010) called this 'masculinity in disguise', in which men would appropriate tools that are apparently non-masculine but in ways that ultimately reinforce male hegemony (id. 121). Reeser focuses on cross-dressing, but al-Limbi adds several tactics to the one of cross-dressing. His infantile behavior and occasional references to homosexuality are part of his lengthy masquerade of masculinity. His performance comes across as unconvincing, although he also exhibits certain principles associated with *ibn al-balad* masculinity, such as standing by his friends and family, and doing his best for what he conceives as right. The audience is aware of these specificities of his character, knowing what is deemed correct masculine behavior and what is not. His performance, in terms of a failed masquerade, unveils certain 'truths' about how masculinity is understood. Al-Limbi, as the anti-hero who nobody would willingly or knowingly aspire to, portrays that opposite of masculinity, hinting at what a 'true' masculine performance then should be: providing for his family, educated in order to aspire a higher standard of living, and construct his own, independent, identity; an image with which the film ends.

8.1.2 White Ibrahim: the baltagi enters Egyptian cinemas

The second film under discussion is *Ibrahim al-Abyad/White Ibrahim* (Marwan Hamid 2009) by the same director from the international hit *'Imarat Ya'qubiyan/The Yaqoubian Building* from 2006, which was also his debut as a filmmaker. He grew up in a cinematic milieu as the son of scriptwriter Wahid Hamid, known for many socially and politically

critical films, such as 'Atif al-Tayyib's *Malaff Fi al-Adab/File in Vice* (1985) and *al-Bari'/The Innocent* (1986), and Yusri Nasrallah's *Tell Me a Story, Shahrazad* (2009). He has furthermore written the scenario for his son's film *The Yaqoubian Building*. Marwan Hamid is also one of the participating directors of the controversial post-2011 film *18 Yom/18 Days* (2011). The film remains controversial because it has not yet been screened for the public in Egypt, apart from its participation in the Ismailiyya International Short Film Festival and a screening at the French Institute in Cairo. Furthermore, two of the directors of the film (Marwan Hamid and Sharif 'Arafa) had also made the campaign video for deposed president Husni Mubarak in 2005 and a pre-election interview with Mubarak, respectively, resulting in strong criticism from the Tahrir-square protestors for these directors' participation in a post-2011 'revolutionary film'. Director Muhammad Khan has also publically criticized the participation of these two directors in the making of *18 Days* because of their support for the former regime.[13]

Marwan Hamid's *The Yaqoubian Building* was also controversial, among other things because of the inclusion of a gay character in the film and numerous suggestive scenes of male intimacy. Another controversial scene in *The Yaqoubian Building* is when the abused Taha – now turned into a 'terrorist' – shoots and kills the officer who had ordered his rape when he was in prison. Yet, the film ends in a condescending tone, when actor 'Adil Imam's character tells his young bride that "we should forget all the humiliations, if not we'll explode from grief". Consistent with his other films, also *White Ibrahim* stirred some controversy. The film's plot is loosely based on a real-life figure with the same nickname, White Ibrahim, which did result in a backlash from the man's family. They demanded 5 million Egyptian pounds from the film's producers for the emotional and material damage they suffered, and to stop screening the film immediately.[14] The film crew's

13 From http://www.elcinema.com/news/nw678921610/ (acc. September 19, 2014).

14 Several blogs reported this story, although none of the major newspapers picked it up. One 2012 article of *al-Ahram* reported that the court had refused the family's plea (al-'Izab 2012, from http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/254570.aspx accessed 16.06.2014). Other blogs and websites reported in 2009 the story of the so-called 'real' White

counterclaim was that it was only fiction with a nominal reference to the actual 'White Ibrahim'. In any case, the controversy – together wth star actor Ahmad al-Saqqa's performance – led to a box office success for this technically very good film.

The actor playing the part of Ibrahim is Ahmad al-Saqqa (1973-), famous for his roles in action films like *Mafiya/Mafia* (Sharif 'Arafa 2002), *Harb Italiyya/War in Italy* (Ahmad Salih 2005) and *al-Jazira/The Island* (Sharif 'Arafa 2007). His fans laud him for personally performing all the stunts in his films, without the use of stuntmen. But the actor's paternalism is also one of the features that seem to be part of his popularity. His action-film star persona regularly associates him with violent characters, whether criminals, policemen or bodyguards, although the films are usually replete with a romantic storyline as well (see also part 2 of this chapter for an example of the actor's stern paternalist attitude towards women, veiled by true love and sacrifice). The explosive action-film genre with fast-paced camera movements and cuts – a new experience for Egyptian cinema – is replete with masculine men, using force and muscles. The actor – not entirely an ideal Spartan – is nevertheless muscular and fit for Egyptian actors' standards. The actor's muscular physicality, combined with the action-films' inclusion of romantic storylines, posits him as the 'natural' protector of women and the weak in society, a complete opposite to Muhammad Sa'd's petty-criminal al-Limbi character.

Not only al-Saqqa's muscularity turns him into a patriarchal figure on screen, more important is his characters' bourgeois propriety. In the 2006 film *'An al-'Ishq wa-'l-Hawa/About Love and Passion* (Kamla Abu Dhikri), for example, he plays the role of a man who is forced to leave his long-time girlfriend after his brother finds out that her sister is a prostitute. Propriety and social constrictions do not allow him to marry a girl with such family. Nevertheless, the female director stays wary of stereotypical depictions of the prostitute (who will eventually marry one of her former clients) as well as al-Saqqa's character, who is devastated by this decision. But the director also portrays the man's

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Ibrahim (called thus because of his clean police record and his use of 'white weapons', i.e. knives), who was a resident of one of the *'ashwā'iyyāt*, but who had educated siblings as opposed to the film's story that he was a single child.

inability to overcome propriety, without, however, judging any of the characters.

A telling image from *White Ibrahim* in terms of the changed gender relations in Egypt is at the end of the film. Ibrahim – after a long and bloody battle with his opponents, being cut and suffering from severe burn wounds all over his body – is framed picking up his shot girlfriend. This stands in stark contrast with Farid Shawqi's muscular star persona and his performance in Salah Abu Sayf's *The Tough Guy* who is supported by his wife after the enduring fight scene at the end of that film. In the next part of the chapter and the discussion on the film *Taymur wa-Shafiqa/Taymur and Shafika* (Ahmad Mar'i 2007), the actor's masculine performance visualizes this distinct change in representations of gender relations more prominently. But let me first take a look at the specific performance of the *baltagi* in *White Ibrahim*.

With a film like *White Ibrahim* – and with an action actor like Ahmad al-Saqqa – the *baltagi* had forcefully and prominently taken his place in Egyptian cinema. Ahmad al-Saqqa, and other actors before him, had played roles of thugs and criminals, but this film focused on the local criminal: the one from the urban informal dwellings. Whereas the threat to the nation came from terrorists residing in these informal settlements, as for example in the film *Hina Maysara/Till Things Get Better* (Khalid Yusif 2007), the new threat comes from the young and unemployed male who is denounced as *baltagi* in order to stigmatize him, criminalize his activity and facilitate violent oppression of these young men.

The film's plot is intertwined with flashbacks and memories from the main character, Ibrahim, in order to 'explain' the character's growing up into the criminal male he is today. The opening scene is the murder of Ibrahim's father when Ibrahim himself was still a child. He witnessed the murder at the hand of the *ma'allim* of the neighborhood together with his wife, who gave the final blow, and one of his *baltagiyya*. The film is fatalistic in the sense that it assumes a straightforward cause and effect development, explaining the reasons behind Ibrahim's present-day *balṭaga*. Ibrahim is immediately placed in aggressive surroundings, linked to poverty and ignorance. Furthermore, he needs to care for his sick mother after his father died,

requiring him to start working from a young age. In another flashback he is shown being abused by the baker, who had discovered the young Ibrahim sleeping next to his daughter, after which Ibrahim took a knife and stabbed the man. The boy's fall into criminality is condescendingly depicted as a logical effect of his background, teasing with the audience's sympathy for this otherwise criminal character.

Although Ibrahim is surrounded by violence and criminality, the place he inhabits, the *ḥāra*, is coded as female. Samia Mehrez (2008: 144-67) notes in her study *Egypt's Culture Wars* the parallels between the *ḥāra* and the nation. Unlike the historical *ḥāra* that Nagib Mahfuz wrote about, or that was the décor for films of the 50s, 60s and again in the 80s, the *ḥāra* now, such as the one in *White Ibrahim*, is not the neat historical area of those earlier films, but the decrepit, lower class dwellings, awash with unemployment, poverty, drug abuse and criminality. But, similar to the historical *ḥāra*, the new areas are also a tightly knit-together social structure that functions to protect its own, almost like an extended family. However, within the film, we should ask the question of whose *ḥāra* it is, and what is Ibrahim's role in it?

The film takes great care in the portrayal of its action scenes, shot in one of the neighborhoods south of the Cairo citadel, al-Abagiyya. At the start of the film, the neighborhood is mentioned by name, and the outdoor scenes indicate the approximate location. Ibrahim is only one of many criminals dealing drugs in the neighborhood, but as the film's hero his story is singled out. His role in this area is defined by his criminal activity; his masculine identity defined by him taking what he believes is his right, by force if necessary. His masculinity is also defined by a defunct understanding of a work ethic. Where work defined a masculine identity in earlier films, and particularly those films depicting men in crisis in chapter 7, work in this film is but a necessity in order to survive. The men in the film, as well as other films placed within the *'ashwā'iyyāt*, no longer take any pride in their work. Partly this is because of the nature of the job they perform (in this film, dealing drugs; in other films it can be small jobs here and there but nothing substantial); partly it is because of the absence of a positive outlook on the future, linked to the nature of those métiers.

There is an additional element of his masculine performance emphasized in the film's plot, namely Ibrahim's friendship with 'Ashri ('Amr Wakid).[15] The film starts with the lifelong friendship between the two men, who have always worked together and helped each other, and dramatically ends with the murder of 'Ashri. The first part of the film focuses on the two men's relationship, as if it were a buddy-film, alongside a short-lived romance between Ibrahim and Hurriyya, after which Ibrahim moves out of the picture during his time in prison. The plot then moves to Hurriyya's story and her personal struggle to reconcile her love for Ibrahim with the knowledge that he killed her father avenging his own father's death. The last part of the film when Ibrahim has left prison refocuses on his relationship with 'Ashri, the friend who betrayed him and will be killed in front of him. His lifelong friend – and the ultimate trust he has continued to put in him – is an essential part of his masculine identity: for him it is inconceivable that his best friend would ever betray him, and he thus places all his trust in the man.

Physically, the body of the *baltagi* and of the star actor Ahmad al-Saqqa plays a central role in the film. The final part of the film is so dramatic, bloody and violent that it reminds of the Passion story, glorifying the 'fit' male's body – Ibrahim's body – that is able to withstand all these violations. Ibrahim uses his body on more than one occasion, which the camera frames as the masculine, virile and muscular male. It is the only site he controls himself and it is the basis for his masculine identity. Yet, although Ibrahim's masculinity is a violent one centered on his physique, he is also depicted as a man with principles, although questionable. He will stick by the girl he loved, even when she marries his archrival, and he also mourns his best friend, although the latter betrayed him. He thus possesses characteristics of the *futuwwa* like *gad'ana* (integrity), *shahāma* (gallantry), and *shagā'a* (courage), as well as the physical strength

15 'Amr Wakid (1973-) garnered international fame with his performances in the US film *Syriana* (Stephen Gaghan 2005) and the UK film *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (Lasse Hallström 2012). But he has also acted in many critically acclaimed films in Egypt, such as *Gannit al-Shayatin/Fallen Angels' Paradise* (Usama Fawzi 1999), *Ahla al-Awqat/The Best of Times* (Hala Khalil 2004) and *Ginent al-Asmak/Fish Garden* (Yusri Nasrallah 2008).

needed to carve out a path for himself in that relentless society. It is not only him. All the other men in the film are tough and 'courageous' in the sense that they do not shy away from a fight or fear police beatings. One scene inside the police station is extremely explicit in this regard. One of the arrested men, after being beaten by the officers, cuts his testicles with a razor blade causing a huge stir. These are marginalized men, who feel they are already emasculated anyway and who wonder how they – as men – could still perform, hence the symbolic castration scene.[16]

To answer the question of whose *ḥāra* it is, I would like to point out in the first place the director Marwan Hamid's controversial history and links to the former regime. The son of a famous screenwriter who has written some controversial films himself in the previous decades, the filmmaker seems to be strongly influenced by the middle class angst of the so-called 'fat cats myth'. The criminal character that Ahmad al-Saqqa embodies is idealized, its muscularity and recourse to violence naturalized. This stands in stark contrast to Muhammad Sa'd's characters, who, although whole-heartedly enjoyed by the audiences, is not exactly the ideal type of man to look up to. While the *ḥāra* in Sa'd's films is equally a place of misery and selfishness as in *White Ibrahim*, it is different because of its lack of realism, its theatricality and its obvious set-design. The reality in *White Ibrahim*, although equally surreal in the imaginary of the film, has more direct effects on how we perceive popular, lower class neighborhoods precisely because of its claim of a realistic portrayal. But it is exactly that, a portrayal within the film's perception of reality, from the point of view of the filmmakers, conveying messages of gender and class.

Within the wider discussion on *balṭaga*, particularly with the recent *qānūn al-balṭaga*, *White Ibrahim* contributes to a narrowed-down discourse on this so-called phenomenon. Simultaneously, its narrow scope on the reasons behind its 'emergence' puts the blame squarely

16 The 'castration scene' can also be read in a more conservative way, namely that the police have to go through great lengths and difficulties in order to keep law and order in the country when dealing with those criminals. The latter are portrayed as being capable of doing anything (i.e. castrate themselves) in order to blemish the police's honorable reputation.

within the lower class neighborhoods, those 'informal' hotbeds of danger and fanaticism. *Al-Limbi* is less direct in its criticism of lower classes, but eventually also represents the ideal of progress and climbing the social ladder, while infantilizing lower class areas. Both films were immensely popular for their own specific reasons, *White Ibrahim* because of its action scenes and al-Saqqa's appeal to young men and women alike, *al-Limbi* because of its initially innovative humor poking fun of Egypt's and the Arab world's bourgeois art scene. Referring back to Fayruz Karawya's argument on the binary way of representing popular neighborhoods, either as jokes or as places of misery, the result is a juxtaposition of the neighborhoods to the presumed 'organized' (which area in Cairo does not show a certain degree of chaos these days?) middle class areas. The gaze is not directed towards women in these films, but towards the passive lower class male. No matter how 'active' he appears to be in action- or dance scenes, the lack of control over his life and his failing adherence to ideals of providing and protecting, places him in an object-position rather than a subject-position, whose body is the site on which the films' politics of class and gender play out.

8.2 The 'New' Man

A completely different form of masculinity is visible in films that portray (upper-) middle and upper-class men. These are the 'New Men', men who have money to spend and who are young, trendy and successful professionals. They live in a totally different age of free encounters with women because of the latter's increased mobility and visibility through mobile phones, the internet and venturing outside the home as students and professionals. These 'new men' are able to cope (financially or otherwise) with the new social context they and others around them find themselves in. I have talked at length about the traits deemed necessary to construct a masculine identity based on providing, protecting, and procreating; all are very important factors in Egyptian cinema. The films under discussion here represent men who have no financial or political worries to consider and could thus, theoretically, live up to this ideal. The question that we could ask

ourselves here is, do they? And to what extent, with what effects and how do they construct their masculine identities?

These films are a result of the developments in Arab cinemas in the late nineties, early 2000s, developments that are called *New Arab Cinema* (Khoury 2005). Within this cinematic renewal a new discourse arose on sexuality and gender identities. Khoury talked mainly about pioneer films, however, while I will consider in the first place those films that are derived from the initial developments within this *New Arab Cinema* discourse. My focus lies on what happens next. Thus, apart from a new and different discourse on gender with perhaps slightly more diversity, do the films discussed here also question the assumption of a masculine norm and do they challenge men's hegemony? We have seen in previous chapters that cinematic (anti-)heroes can question patriarchal norms and traditions, but finally they continue to resort to one form or another of male hegemony. As such, masculine identities have so far remained untouched and have been taken for granted.

The decade in which the films take place are one in which the mobile phone and internet have seen an incredible rise in popularity across classes. Men and women now enjoy more flexibility to stay in contact through these means of communication, bypassing the gender divide. Together with the increased presence of women in society since the 1960s' active gender policies by 'Abd al-Nasir (Hatem 1992, Bier 2011) and continued by al-Sadat in the 70s, women have not only flooded universities, but also the workspace. With increasing money to spend, women are now also in the position to demand more and go out more. The question is how the film industry deals with this increased female presence in the public sphere and what roles it constitutes for both men and women.

The films considered here show diverse masculinities, though not comparable to the ones in the movies discussed in the first part. An important film exploring this new discourse on gender and identity is the 2003 film *Long Nights* (Hani Khalifa).[17] This film's scenarist, Tamir

17 The film's plot revolves around four upper-middle class couples who have no financial, social or political problems to worry about, and asks what this carefree existence will do to their relationships.

Habib, has also written the scenario for the first film that will be discussed in this part of the chapter, *Taymur and Shafika*, with the popular (action film) actor Ahmad al-Saqqa. This time al-Saqqa plays the role of a police officer working as a private bodyguard for high-ranking officials. His character has rather conservative ideas about male-female relations in this film. He considers himself and acts like "*Sī Sayyid*" or "alpha-male" (literally Mister Man and an epithet for a controlling patriarch). His star persona's paternalism is here made more explicit.

The second film, *Nur 'Eni/Light of my Eyes* (Wa'il Ihsan 2010), is with the popular singer and actor Tamer Hosny. He embodies perhaps the most recognizable form of paternalist masculinity and his fans have made an unofficial website called 'Tamer Academy', as if wanting to 'learn' to be just like their star. In *Light of My Eyes* he plays the role of a rich kid whose parents have passed away and now has to take care of his brother and for some reason also of his best friend. His star persona is also a romantic type; one of his first films is called *Sayyid al-'Atifi/Emotional Sayyid* ('Ali Ragab 2005), but simultaneously shows off his masculine features such as his hairy chest, muscles and over-protective nature, embodying simultaneously an old and new masculinity (Milestone and Meyer 2012: 114). In his own way, the actor portrays the new man, in the way that the new man discourse ironically reinstates male domination. We have seen that the masculinities of the 70s, for example, were able to adapt themselves to a new, 'soft', materialist society, in order to impose themselves as the dominant male, commodifying also women. The growing Western materialism in the first decade of the 2000s was also appropriated by men, taking care of their looks, entertaining friendships with women, yet continuing to position themselves in dominant subject-positions through their controlling paternalism.

8.2.1 Taymur, the alpha-male

A film that explicitly portrays gender relations is Khalid Mar'i's 2007 film *Taymur and Shafika*. Khalid Mar'i (1970-), started his filmmaking career as an editor, having studied montage at the Higher Cinema Institute in Giza. He has edited critically acclaimed films like *Gannit al-*

Shayatin/Fallen Angels' Paradise (Usama Fawzi 1999), *Long Nights* (see above), *Bahibb al-Sima/I Love Cinema* (Usama Fawzi 2004) and the film discussed earlier in this chapter, *White Ibrahim*. *Taymur and Shafika* is his debut as a director, after which he directed other popular comedies with star actor Ahmad Hilmi, for example the films *Asif 'Ala al-Iz'ag/Sorry For Disturbing* (2008), *Bulbul Hayran/Perplexed Bulbul* (2010), and *'Asal Iswid/Molasses* (2010).

The second half of the first decade of the new millennium seems like a decay of gender relations into a patriarchal and heteronormative abyss compared to the new and promising discourses on sexuality and gender that emerged in the handful of exceptional films defined as part of *New Arab Cinema* in the 90s and early 2000s. The main character in *Taymur and Shafika*, Taymur (Ahmad al-Saqqa), is extremely masculine and muscular for an essentially romantic comedy, somehow mocking the actor's ambiguous presence. However, that same genre is abused to continuously ridicule his female protagonist's achievements. His neighbor Shafika (Muna Zaki) is a very bright student who soon finishes her doctoral dissertation. She is even appointed as the new minister of the environment (without elections, it is worth noting).

Early in the film, the two children are already conspicuously gendered. Taymur is very protective and plays with miniature guns, while Shafika is fragile and plays with dolls. Both Taymur and Shafika lose their fathers early on when they are still children, leaving Taymur as the only male in the extended family that the two neighboring flats form. Through a voice-over we hear the grown-up Taymur talking about the responsibility he had to take on as a boy who unwillingly and prematurely was turned into a man. Deniz Kandiyoti's (1994) critique of her own assumptions vis-à-vis Middle Eastern men are here actually played out and posited as the ideal. The *only* available role for the young boy is to become a patriarch. Shafika on the other hand has never really turned into a woman and is continuously ridiculed and infantilized – even when she becomes a minister. To become a woman, it is clearly not enough to achieve professionally; her womanhood is only affirmed when she finally accepts Taymur as a husband and on his terms, too.

Taymur and Shafika is not only a comedy; it is also a romance and an action movie. This mixture of genres brings the two oppositional characters together and again emphasizes the film's gendered narrative. The action scenes at the end of the movie portray Taymur as the active male rescuing his beloved, while she is passively waiting to be rescued. To be able to aptly perform his muscularity, Taymur needs to distance himself from his female surroundings, studying in a masculine academy (the police academy). Shafika, on the other hand, studies in a '*khawāgāt*'[18] university, downplaying the space she inhabits from the start. He also performs a masculine job, as a bodyguard and police officer. Yvonne Tasker argues that action films privilege "sites for the performance of masculinity" (Tasker 2002: 236). In *Taymur and Shafika*, the hero has little freedom of movement to perform his masculinity in such feminized spaces, being confined to his family's flat, or the elaborate offices and luxurious cars of officials he is required to safeguard. Just like the *ḥāra* was a feminized space requiring protection in earlier *futuwwa*- and other films, the flats and the building in which both protagonists live are feminized spaces, specifically after the death of their fathers.

In a way this compromises the main character's hard-bodied masculinity which in turn becomes more visible in those surroundings, pointing at the efforts that went into achieving it, rather than presenting it as a natural part of men's bodies. This is similar to the earlier *futuwwa* character, which has shown that this specific (and idealized) masculine type – in terms of muscles, power and control – is only available for the 'best of men'. There are numerous scenes of Taymur's bedroom, with pictures of him in his own 'sites for the performance of masculinity', for example his graduation from the police academy, or him riding a horse, as well as his dumbbells on the

18 Taymur calls her university a '*khawāgāt*' university, referring to its international status (such as the British University, the German University, or the most famous, the American University in Cairo). The use of the term is pejoratively, and dates back to the presence of Greeks in Egypt in the early 20th century, who were also referred to as *khawāgāt*, (Christian) foreigners. To this date, in lower and working class areas the word is occasionally (and sometimes pejoratively) used when Muslims refer to (Egyptian) Christians and foreigners.

floor and weapons displayed on the wall. The film also provides ample opportunities for Taymur to exhibit his strength in one action scene after another. A notable distinction between the action-hero Taymur and his female surroundings is that both Taymur's and Shafika's mothers are constantly seen eating and drinking coffee together, often accompanied by Shafika. Taymur – as the active male – has no time for such trivialities as food; it is only a bodily necessity for him, not a social event. The film's portrayal of gender differences is, perhaps, sarcastic in the way that they are exaggerated to the point of ridicule. It is difficult not to laugh at the two preoccupied, almost caricatural mothers and the two young people who try to break free from their respective mothers' care.

The film's plot reminds of a classic Egyptian comedy, *Mirati Mudir 'Amm/My Wife, the General Manager* (Fatin 'Abd al-Wahhab 1966). In both films the woman has achieved a higher social and professional status than her love/husband. As we have seen, the 1960s were a totally different era that proposed ideas of working women, building the nation and a social organization of society – albeit through state paternalism. Further, the films of that period were characterized by images of social progress. *Taymur and Shafika* is made in a different time, when the codes of modernity are applied in a different manner, circumventing official rhetoric and questioning a bourgeois ideology's claims for modernity – without, however, questioning the ultimate goal of social progress, or questioning heteronormativity. It is also made in different social settings, in a time when women going out for work are now considered a threat to a reactionary, traditionalist and even violent form of masculinity, as embodied by Taymur. There is no sense of equality between the two and *Sī Sayyid* Taymur wants Shafika to resign and stay at home after the wedding as per the example of his and her mothers who are both never seen leaving the building. He is not simply controlling, he does so 'sympathetically' and 'naturally' as the protective male. The film measures Taymur's love for Shafika through his protectiveness and jealousy, and measures Shafika's love by her obedience to Taymur's demands. A good example is at the start of the film, when Taymur picks up Shafika from university. Jealous because she was seen leaving the building with her friends – among

them a boy, equally muscular as Taymur – Taymur scolds her. Shafika is thus immediately forced to defend her behavior which she continues to do throughout the film.

Even if we consider for a second the film's 'novel' ideas of working and 'freely' moving women – Shafika actually never moves freely, not even as a minister since Taymur is appointed as her bodyguard – and the sometimes over-zealous protectionism of Taymur to the point of laughter, the plot and mise-en-scène of the film betray its underlying rigid gender order. As already mentioned above, Taymur from an early age plays with guns and other masculine objects, while Shafika plays with dolls. He is the action-hero using his muscles first and foremost; she is the smart nerd who uses her brain. He is respected in his job and regularly promoted and recognized for his services, while she – even when promoted to become a minister – is reminded by everyone around her that she is still "so young and such a pretty woman". Although at her job nobody reminds her that she is 'just' a woman, the constant references to her beauty in the first place and her professional skills second, can only be understood in terms of Taymur's and her (male) superiors' sexism towards Shafika *as* a woman. Only in the end when Taymur barely survives an exploding bomb (he jumpes aside a mere second before the explosion) does Shafika 'finally' realize how far he is prepared to go, and how much he loves her. Thus she resigns from her ministerial post – as Taymur demanded – and agrees to marry him.

Taymur's muscularity fits within what Richard Dyer called "the white man's muscles" (Dyer 2002a: 262-73), except that the white man has now been replaced with a (whitish) Cairene upper-middle class male. The muscularity of white men proved their superiority in popular art, and, although in Egyptian cinema and particularly this film, the concept of race is perhaps not the main feature, Taymur portrays the upper-middle class (and police officials') superiority through his trained and toned body. The images of fit men stem from a colonial past (Jacob 2011) and we have seen throughout this research that muscular masculine bodies have continued to play a prominent role in Egyptian films. Occasionally ridiculed or questioned for their abusive traditionalism (such as the *ma'allim* in the 50s and 60s), the

ultimate ideal was still a fit, muscular man, but also an educated man. From this long history of muscular, protective men represented in Egyptian cinema, Taymur derives only just that: the paternalism he associates with men's presumed superior position in the family and in society because of men's 'natural' inclination towards being protective and their life experiences as a reason for protecting the naïve, unwitting women.

8.2.2 Light of My Eyes*: an Egyptian buddy film*

The director of the film *Light of My Eyes* (2010) is Wa'il Ihsan, the same director who made the film *al-Limbi* which was discussed earlier in this chapter. Muhammad Sa'd's performance appeared ambiguous, performing a lower class character that is non-masculine in his inability to convince the viewer of his external, corporal image as a man. Yet, at the same time his character is sympathetic and does his best to uphold a set of values and principles, such as the respect for his domineering mother, and his willingness to do whatever his fiancée requires of him. The main actor in Wa'il Ihsan's film *Light Of My Eyes* is played by a very different actor, Tamer Hosny (1977-), nicknamed *Nigm al-Gīl* ('Star of the Generation'). His nickname seems to suggest the actor's great influence and popularity among youngsters across the Arab world. Tamer Hosny is not only the main actor in the film, he is also the film's scriptwriter. But Hosny is in the first place a singer, famous and loved from the Arab Maghreb to the Gulf and his movies are primarily vehicles for the popular singer's star persona.

Tamer Hosny lost, however, a great deal of his followers after the protests of 2011. He was one of the artists who initially did not support the uprising against Husni Mubarak, but somehow thought that a public appearance in Tahrir square – the epicenter of the popular uprising – would be a good idea. Instead, he was booed and yelled at; the army even had to interfere to safely remove the singer from the crowds in the square. Later that day, he appeared in a YouTube video, crying about what had happened – to the entertainment of some of the protestors. His statements in which he urged the protestors to go home, fit his paternalist masculinity that is similar to the regime's paternalism. As such, the protestors were not amused with his remarks

and refused to give him a platform for his public persona in Tahrir square. One of the main reasons for the protests was a refusal of the regime's ideology and its paternalist denigration of the marginalized and subjugated men and women in Egypt. It was a refusal of Mubarak's fatherly figure, or the 'daddy state' as Swedenburg (2007: 5) called it, and a demand for self-development and self-rule.

The singer's nickname may also refer to his online star persona. He lives his life online for his fans, announcing his marriage through his own YouTube channel, the birth of his daughter and congratulating his wife on becoming a mother through social networking sites. But the couple's online life also resulted in a backlash, with rumors spreading about their divorce, or the rumor that his wife was married before him to another young singer, the Jordanian Yahya Suays. The latter, however, denied any relationship with Basma Bousil, claiming the reports were falsified. Hosny, from his part, did not involve himself in the treadmill of rumors, and instead continued his tour around the Arab world. Aside from the rumors, his online life and the pictures that appear, make the actor and singer simultaneously an ordinary young Egyptian, although his high number of followers and fans turn him also into a star, that special, yet ordinary someone who appeals to a large number of a generation of Egyptian and Arab youngsters.

In *Light of My Eyes* Tamer Hosny plays the character Nur/Ahmad.[19] He takes on the role of a modern, hip and cool youngster. Initially he does not act like an all-controlling *Sī Sayyid*,[20] yet the film is a

19 Nur (in the original title) is also a (unisex) name, which Ahmad had taken on after meeting a blind girl. He chose the name Nur because it also has the connotation in Arabic of someone very dear to you. At the same time it refers to the actual light in the eyes of the blind girl after an operation that restored her vision and she unknowingly meets Ahmad for the 'first' time.

20 Tamer Hosny has recently made the song *Si Al Sayed*, a duet with the American rapper Snoop Dogg, in which he explains his vision on man's control of the household. According to the song, and affirmed by Snoop Dogg, he decides what happens and his word is final. If it were not for the video clip's stereotypical depiction of a loud, domineering wife, the song's lyrics might as well be understood as a joke of extremely controlling male behaviour. Instead, it is more likely a 'lesson' he teaches his unexperienced wife in the clip about the facts of married life and the differences between men and women.

conservative display of patriarchal norms. In a similar line as Taymur, Nur/Ahmad also often resorts to violence veiled by his protective nature in order to assert his masculine identity. He takes on the role of father figure within his own family (after his parents had died); at a certain point violently scolding his younger brother for the latter's drug abuse. Also similar to Taymur is that both men are capable of having a 'modern', 'Western' relationship with their girlfriends without portraying them as 'loose women': it remains within the confines of proper conduct. Particularly this last element creates the impression that the film depicts relationships in a novel way and that both men and women – in the setting of a romantic comedy – are capable of loving and respecting each other as (unequal) equals. But this impression rather quickly crumbles and gives way to a male-dominated narrative and a conservative display of patriarchal values.

Although the film's poster with actors Tamer Hosny and Minna Shalabi would have one think otherwise, the film's narrative is entirely centered on the main (male) character, Nur/Ahmad, and his best friend, Tariq ('Amr Yusif). The opening sequence establishes the relationship between the two boys, playing football when they were still in elementary school. Ahmad protects his friend, and beats up the bullies that annoy him, shouting "nobody touches Tariq!" The romance with the blind girl (Minna Shalaby) is only a diversion from Husni's character's main interest, his best friend; her main part in the film is to antagonize the two friends. Ahmad's protective instincts towards Tariq extend to adulthood, for example when he saves Tariq's life at the end of the film, resulting in a very emotional plot twist.

In her account on interracial buddy films in Hollywood cinema, Jennifer Gillan (2001: 47) argues that one of the goals of these films is to put forward one stable and heterosexual masculine identity, divided over two star actors. These films then emphasize the companionship between a black and white male, downplaying racial differences both in the film and in society. While *Light of My Eyes* is not a bi-racial film, some of Gillan's points about the buddy film apply to this film too. Both men are young, middle class, educated and – it is assumed – heterosexual males, with little or no difference except for their personality which is constructed as complementary. As such, the

concept of a 'buddy film' is here understood as a film about two best friends – one supporting the other – and a woman who is exchanged between the two men, whose role is limited to problematizing a status quo. This 'buddy-aspect' of the film allows for the male protagonists to enter the 'female-oriented' genre of a romantic comedy without fear for homoeroticism. Homosocial bonding is clear, but not problematized because of the fact that the two main characters – in this case Nur/Ahmad and Tariq – together form a unified masculine identity.

The 'buddy-aspect' is applicable, in fact, to most of the films I discussed in this chapter. They all have a similar hierarchy of characters, where the main male (anti-)hero is supported by another male character with strong homosocial bonding.[21] For Ahmad in *Light of My Eyes*, his friendship with Tariq is more important than anything in the world. Thus, he saves Tariq at the end and exposes himself to a life threatening situation in a fight, taking the knife that was intended for his friend. This dramatic turn of events eventually leads to the two friends reuniting and reaffirming the male bond needed to construct their unified identity, though this time together with the girl as well. The inclusion of the girl is here to be understood as an affirmation of their heterosexual identities, leaving in the middle which one she will choose. Her presence is similar to what Robin Wood called a homophobic disclaimer (1986: 229), to safely presume the men's heterosexuality and to be sure about who is exactly whose "light of my eyes".

Ahmad's masculinity is furthermore constructed through sites of masculine performance (Tasker 2002), for example when the camera

21 Buddy films are common and one of those films is *al-Sa'alik/The Vagabonds*. There are two *Vagabond* films, one from 1968, and the other from 1985. In the 1968 film (Yusif Ma'luf) two men hunt down rich women to enjoy themselves and have them pay their bills. The 1985 film (Dawud 'Abd al-Sayyid) relates to economic changes in Egypt, focusing on two best friends – one betrays the other– who are poor and downtrodden, but will become part of the country's richest, once they start dealing drugs and become 'proper' businessmen. Also earlier in this chapter, *White Ibrahim* showcases certain aspects of a buddy film highlighting the lifelong friendship between the two protagonists – with a woman in the middle to maintain a heteronormative status-quo.

zooms in on his skills and agility in football, or the character's interest in cars. This aspect corresponds to the star's real-life images of him with expensive cars, or flexing his muscles in the gym, as an extension of his masculine identity and star persona. Through these sites, he is able to perform his masculinity uncontested. One of the major aspects of his masculine identity is his recourse to violence, even versus his domestic servant. At one point in the film Ahmad and Tuna (the nickname of his servant, meaning tuna fish) 'jokingly' slap each other, culminating in Ahmad hitting her in her face with his fist. When moments later his brother wants to slap Tuna, he scolds him, saying "we've always treated her as our sister, not our servant". As the elder brother, he has the privilege of violence. But worse is the way the film ridicules the daily domestic violence in Egyptian homes against servants, who are subjected to harassment and abuse with no recourse to the law. Ahmad's statement shows that it would be 'okay' to hit a servant, but only when a certain 'righteous' authority (just like him) were to commit the violence. Ahmad's masculine performance is portrayed as an ideal masculinity, wise in his judgment, correct in his treatment of those 'subjugated' to the fatherly role he has taken upon himself. His decision making is furthermore not questioned; rather, the narrative affirms his correct decisions.

8.3 Discussion

In *Masculinities and Culture*, John Beynon (2002) discerns four themes in the representations of new millennium men: 'new man' versus 'old man', men running wild, emasculated men, and men as victims and aggressors. His conclusion is that the outlook for masculinities is bleak. This is also true in an Egyptian context, if we were to believe the popular box office hits produced by al-Subki, with the *baltagi* character featuring in the main role. They claim to have knowledge of lower class neighborhoods, their 'Baltaxploitation'[22] films situated within

22 I have chosen an explicit reference to the other 'exploitation'-films, such as Blaxploitation, because of these films' commercial exploitation of a presumed 'phenomenon' in Egypt (*balṭaga*), while exploiting also the representation of

them. But their discourse is a reactionary one: the masculinity of these lower class men, although hindered by financial and professional disturbances, is dangerous and self-destructive. The portrayal of lower class men in the last decade is of young, unmarried and unemployed males who occasionally resort to drug abuse, violence and often criminal activities. The occasional exception to the new norm for lower class men is performed by Karim 'Abd al-'Aziz, for example in *Abu 'Ali* (Ahmad Galal 2005) and *Wahid Min al-Nas/One of the People* (Ahmad Galal 2006).

Yet, the criminal men can do this with the sympathy of the audience, and the only reason why is because they *are* men placed in a discourse of crisis. This crisis is portrayed as a social crisis, of living in cramped, unfit housing. The social crisis is exacerbated by the impression of having lost their initial male benefits in favor of women working outside the home, which results in an economic crisis as well. If they have no job, they will not be able to afford housing, nor the money to marry – like al-Limbi who was for thirteen years unable to get married to his fiancée. The crisis is also politicized. The young men are criminalized, demonized as either fundamentalists or misogynists in public discourse. Recently – and particularly since the summer of 2013 – the designation 'terrorist' is also back in currency. Furthermore, the different films about or with *baltagiyya* have a conspicuous absence of a father figure, which – it is assumed – leads to criminal behavior. This creates the impression that these young men's criminality needs to be controlled and repressed by the state that has taken over the 'legitimate' role of father. The stereotypical representations of these young unemployed lower class men result in their hypervisibility as men, and thus as problems, while their subversive power is portrayed as a threat that needs to be contained.

Opposite this lower class male type we find an upper-middle class type that is portrayed as a hegemonic ideal. The 'new men' who belong to higher social classes are at first sight able to renegotiate gender relations and live trouble-free lives together with their partners. Yet, the films' narratives do not question heteronormativity, the narratives

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and the actual, lived experiences of lower class Egyptians specifically and people living in *'ashwā'iyyāt* more generally.

centering on the male characters. Common elements in all these films are the buddies, the supportive male actors that accompany the stars, thus focusing more on inter-male relationships rather than male-female relations.

The continuing uncritical portrayal of men as the bastions of stability and righteousness, without considering the possibility that it is masculinity itself that needs a serious reconsideration of its basic tenets, namely its normativity, reinforces the impression that Egyptian society (and its filmic representation) is in dire need of a new strong figure. This 'backlash' to more conservative forms of masculinity does not come as a surprise, if we consider the developments that Egypt's economy and society has undergone the last decades. One's gender identity is described in terms of difference and in terms of what one is not. The revolutionary fervor of 2011 for a moment conveyed some hope for the renegotiation of gender relations and a possibility for the "end of masculinity" as we know it, but unfortunately it backlashed rather quickly and again society is divided not only along class lines, but also along generation, religion and gender lines.

9. Female masculinities

Throughout this study about representations of masculinities it has become clear that masculinity is not related to men alone, or indeed sometimes "has nothing to do with men whatsoever" (Sedgwick 1995, quoted in Noble 2004: ix). Gender is a historical social construct, although I do not wish to completely ignore biological markers. In order to put weight to the claim that masculinity is not men's monopoly, this chapter explores constructions and performances of female masculinities as they are represented in Egyptian cinema. Apart from female masculinities, this chapter will also include a discussion on the contribution of women directors to the cinema industry. In the first part, I will consider several films that represent a ubiquitous type of female masculinity, namely the *ma'allima*.[1] A *ma'allima* does not differ much from her male counterpart, the *ma'allim*, in terms of behavior and character. The type is not only present in films; in real life, too, a *ma'allima* exists. Just like the films, the denotation is often used for an uneducated and working-class woman, owner of a shop or coffeehouse, and in general within the neighborhood a woman with a relatively high economic standing and social regard as a self-employed woman.[2]

She also exhibits several aspects of the *bint al-balad* (el-Messiri 1978). These characteristics are not related to the *ma'allima*'s outer looks and dress, however, since she might dress similar to her male counterpart, minus the mustache. She would be wearing a *galabiyya* (long dress worn by men and women), occasionally a *talḥīfa* (a scarf, worn over the shoulder, usually by men and particularly in the *Ṣa'īd*),

1 The word *ma'allima* is the feminine form of *ma'allim*, the type that was discussed in chapter 5.

2 It should be noted that the Prophet Muhammad's first wife, Khadija, was also an independent and self-employed woman, at the head of a trading business, respected and revered as Umm al-Mu'minīn, Mother of the Believers. Islamic historiography remembers her as a wealthy and working woman, and does not forget to mention the fact that she was older than Muhammad.

and occasionally a traditional veil (the *ṭarḥa* rather than *hijab*) often worn by peasant women and easier to move around in since it is only wrapped around the top of the head and the hair. She can also carry a stick, the *nabūt*, which, we have seen earlier, is a male symbol of power and standing (see chapter 6). She differs from the *bint al-balad* in that she does not necessarily wear clothing that emphasize her female figure (el-Messiri 1978: 89), although the *ma'allima* character of belly dancer Tahiyya Carioca does not hesitate to reveal her body's contours. Nevertheless, the *ma'allima* in general resembles the *bint al-balad* more in terms of character because of their similar background and social setting. The adjectives to describe a *ma'allima* or a *bint al-balad* are similar to the ones used for the *futuwwa*, like for example *shahma* and *gada'a*.[3]

But the main goal of this chapter is not simply to describe one or more types of female masculinities, rather the goal is to question how the masculinity exhibited by women challenges or affirms gender norms. Halberstam (1998) coined the term female masculinity, questioning the continuous domination of the topic of (biological) men in men and masculinity studies. Female masculinity for Halberstam is more than only a woman showing masculine traits; rather, it breaks through the gender binary of men and women, masculine and feminine, heterosexual and homosexual, and separates men from masculinity. In *An Introduction to Female Masculinity*, she writes that "[t]his widespread indifference to female masculinity [...] has clearly ideological motivations and has sustained the complex social structures that wed masculinity to maleness and to power and domination" (Halberstam 2002: 356). Women donning the 'mask' of masculinity point precisely at the pose, the attitude and construction that masculinity is. Although she is more interested in the non-heterosexual female masculinity deconstructing the binary of heteronormativity, this analysis will consider heterosexual female masculinities because explicit representations of homosexuality – specifically female homosexuality – is almost impossible in Egypt,

3 In general, these words seem to indicate that women can be described in manly terms as well, particularly considering that *gada'* means, among other things, 'manly toughness and courage' (Badawi-Hinds).

except for occasional allusions to it.[4] Further, lesbians in Egyptian films – if they do appear – quite explicitly exhibit their feminine features, rather than masculine looks.[5] Also, this does not mean that there is no mentioning of the possibility of homosexuality and some scenes and characters (also female) can be viewed through a queer lens. Yet, a queer reading is not my main concern here.

The main question I will address in this chapter is how female masculinities contribute to or challenge a masculine norm. To this end, I will explore several other questions as well, such as: to what extent do certain female types exhibit masculine characteristics and how does this put them in relation to other men and women? How do they construct their female identities while at the same time using markers of masculinity? And are these women considered equals to men or rather a threat to male domination and heteronormativity? Perhaps 'masculine women' are one of the cornerstones of a patriarchal order to safeguard a male norm? Women in power are obviously not necessarily also women who mete out new possibilities of being a woman; instead they might as well assert their power through patriarchal power schemes – as mothers or wives. As such, female masculinity as I understand it here is not the queer female identity which Halberstam talks about. It includes quite literally those women who are represented in certain films as women asserting masculine

4 An exceptional scene is in the film *al-Su'ud Ila al-Hawiyya/The Climb Into the Abyss* (Kamal al-Shaykh 1978), with the actress Madiha Kamil in bed with her French female lover. In the 2007 film *Till Things Get Better* (Khalid Yusif), the director included a lesbian scene in the film. Although even this film only alluded to it (the lights were off and we only heard some frolicking) and the whole scene only lasted a few seconds, it nevertheless garnered lots of criticism and a court case. The Islamic thinker and professor at Cairo University, Abd al-Sabbur Shahin, demanded to refer the two actresses and the director of the film to the Public Prosecutor for "spreading sexual abnormality, lesbianism and moral deprivation" (from alarabiya.net). However, there are no later articles available explaining happened after. The director did file a case against one private channel for deleting several scenes from the film (al-Turki 2009).

5 This does not mean there are no other available modes in Egyptian cinema deconstructing binaries, such as crossdressing comedies. I refer to Menicucci (1998) for examples on this specific topic in Egyptian films.

traits and possibly threatening the gender status quo, not necessarily gender binaries.

The films discussed in this chapter cover several decades, while retaining a focus on one particular type as portrayed by different actresses, screenwriters and directors. The *ma'allima* will thus be the main focus of the first part of this chapter, although it is not my intention to elaborately describe the type's different representations. The main focus remains on how this type is able to carve out new ways of being a woman, also as equal to men (at least those men in her immediate surroundings). We will see, however, that the way the type is constructed depends on general discourses about women's roles in society, prevalent at the time of making the film. The film *al-Ma'allim Bulbul/Master Bulbul* (Hasan Ramzi 1951) portrays a cross dressing woman as *ma'allim* (played by actress Hagar Hamdi).[6] Her character is specifically coded as working-class. But the film also portrays her as a person with some standing within the confines of the *ḥāra*.[7] Yet, as in most pre-'52 films, the *ḥāra* was a place of laughter and joy, and only rarely depicted with more realistic interpersonal relations in a few first attempts towards realism.

Judith Franco states (referring to Roberts) in her essay on female protagonists in masculine road/buddy movies: "inserting female protagonists into a male-oriented genre neither subverts nor

6 In terms of gender representations, the film reveals some enticing forms of femininity and masculinity. The female *ma'allim* (not even called *ma'allima*) is able to pull off her male stunt, although the other men in the *ḥāra* remain skeptical of her 'impersonation' of a masculine man. The film then proceeds to the woman returning back to her feminine 'self', dressing like an upper-class girl and acting in a film within the film. Her tough guy performance is eventually questioned and finally she returns to being a woman in her neighborhood, while gender binaries and heteronormativity – as well as class-based differences – are restored under loud cheers of both men and women when she accepts her lower class female identity. Nevertheless, the film reveals the tough guy personality of the *ma'allim* as a mask, a performance that anyone could convincingly give.

7 Hagar Hamdi also played the role of a *ma'allima* in the film *Bint al-Ma'allim/Daughter of the* Ma'allim (Ramzi 1951), in which she takes over her father's duties as boss of the coffeeshop when he is falsely accused and imprisoned. Her female character as the daughter of the *ma'allim* is again living in a lower class neighborhood, in one of the historical quarters of Cairo.

subsumes its masculinist tendencies" (2004: 2). The analysis of the films will thus keep in mind that women in masculine roles and male-oriented genres – not exactly a typology we can give to the Egyptian films in this chapter – are not necessarily also tackling patriarchal structures, or the social structure these women move around in. The analysis also takes into account Messner's critique of the practical use of exceedingly individualizing every type of masculinity and describing each in detail. But rather it will describe "group-based relations of power, and different – sometimes contradictory – relations to material interests" (Messner 2004: 76). It is not so much about the *ma'allima*'s specific individual type, but rather about investigating how she is able to carve out her identity in relation to others within the local structure of the *ḥāra*.

The rest of the chapter is limited to the post-'52 films, films from the 50s and 60s, as well as the new-realist films and their commercial derivatives of the 80s and early 90s in which many of these *ma'allimāt* (plural of *ma'allima*) are portrayed. Not many actresses have taken on the role of *ma'allima*. Two of the most famous are Tahiyya Carioca and Nadia al-Gindi. The roles they have taken on are different, in which we can see the earlier *ma'allimāt* not necessarily as criminal women. This has changed in the films of the later period, in which there is a development towards a more criminal portrayal of *ma'allimāt*, similar to their male counterparts. Although the *ma'allima* has been present over the history of Egyptian cinema, there are more obvious depictions in certain periods. This is mainly because of the star personas of the two most famous actresses in these *ma'allima* roles, Tahiyya Carioca and Nadia al-Gindi. Further, certain periods in Egyptian film history have sought to portray lower class areas more than other periods, namely the 50s and 60s, and again in the 80s, raising the chances that such a specifically lower class type is portrayed or takes on an essential role in the films.

The first half of the chapter is divided into two main time frames: the first part focuses on the *ma'allima* of the 50s and 60s discussing Tahiyya Carioca's *ma'allima* in the films *Shabab Imra'a/Youth of a Woman* (Salah Abu Sayf 1956) with occasional references to her performance in *al-Ma'allima/The Ma'allima* (Hasan Rida 1958). The second part focuses

on the *ma'allima* of the 70s (and followed up in later films), discussing the film *Hikmitak Ya Rabb/God Knows Best* (Husam al-Din Mustafa 1976). In the second half of the chapter I also include a discussion on the importance of the films made by female directors. The gender dynamics they portray might be different from those of their male counterparts. I will include a discussion on *'Afwan Ayyuha al-Qanun/Pardon Me, Law!* (Inas al-Daghaydi 1985), which is based on a story by Hala Sarhan, now a famous talk show host on one of the many independent satellite channels. The second film under discussion is *Imra'a wa-Imra'a/A Woman and a Woman* (Nadia Hamza 1995), written by Nadia Hamza together with Inas Bakr. The film's team boasts mainly women, but the question remains whether it also subverts gender roles and dynamics.

9.1 The ambiguous case of the *ma'allima*

> Traditionally, the *mu'allima* has in her shop a large special chair or a *baladi* sofa on which she sits and smokes a *shisha*. She is coquettish and gives much care to her appearance, adorning herself with expensive jewelry. Her dress, however, is a man's *gallabiyya*, which is complemented by a rather masculine air. She takes part in quarrels like any man, and disciplines anyone she dislikes with a beating.
>
> Sawsan el-Messiri, *Ibn al-Balad* (1978: 64)

El-Messiri describes the *ma'allima* explicitly as a masculine woman, although she does not hide her femininity either, very similar to the *ma'allimāt* and lower class women in the novels by Nagib Mahfuz. She continues to describe a *ma'allima* as a local leader within the confines of the *ḥāra*. Several things were prominent in the films, too. The first is that women dressing up and acting like men is not a reason for ridicule, rather for respect. In these films the *ma'allimāt* inspire awe, albeit possibly threatening their femininity because of their overtly masculine behavior. Another element is the fact that these local women are somehow able to convincingly cross a spatial binary,

between the public and the private. Whereas the private is sometimes associated with the feminine, the public can consequently sometimes be associated with the masculine (Elsadda 2006: 1, 4). Yet, this supposed binary is a construct of a modernist discourse, as Elsadda proves, and in the words of Soheir Morsy:

> "[r]ecent historical and micro-sociological accounts of women's position in the Arab world pose a challenge to universalistic models of male-female power relations, notably those derived from the modernist paradigm, and the allegedly universal opposition of the public and private domains."
>
> (Morsy 1990: 92)

The *ma'allima* in Egypt – as shop owner a part of the economic elite of the local neighborhood – is represented as a woman who can 'be a man' outside the home, while retaining her femininity and female duties inside the home (Early 1993: 5). In this regard, I would like to stress the difference in Egyptian Arabic that the language applies on describing a woman positively 'as a man' (*rāgil*) rather than the pejorative term 'acting manly' (*mistargila*). A famous expression in Egypt is that "a woman equals a hundred men" (*is-sitt 'add mīt rāgil*), something a *ma'allima* takes very seriously in the films discussed here. The difference between the words is more of a linguistic nature, rather than referring to the woman's gender identity. *Mistargil* refers to the act, which can be truthful or faked, but certainly not expected of a woman, while defining a person as *rāgil* suggests a number of positively coded characteristics this person is considered to embody. Nevertheless, it always depends on the context in which the words are used to be able to define whether its meaning is positive or negative.

9.1.1 The ma'allima *in the 1950s: Tahiyya Carioca*

In 1952 Salah Abu Sayf made the dark realist thriller *Rayya and Sikina* about a couple of sisters on a killing spree in Alexandria in the early 20th century. Their originally true story had gained urban legend status by the time he made this film, with actress Nigma Ibrahim in the fearful role of the *ma'allima* and leader of a gang of women kidnappers and murderers. A couple of years later, in 1956, he made his famous

film *The Youth of a Woman*, sometimes rather loosely translated as *The Leech*. In the latter film, we find Tahiyya Carioca (1919-1999) as the 'woman', the *ma'allima* of the *ḥāra*, owner of a flower mill and of an apartment she will rent out to a young aspiring bachelor from a small village in the Delta. The film presents the then prevalent discourse of modernity versus tradition, which we find in the characters of the *ma'allima* Shafa'at (Carioca) as the older woman from a traditional and historical quarter, and the young man Imam (Shukri Sarhan) as the peasant who goes to the city aspiring education and a 'modern' life.

Sabrina Joseph (2009) reads *The Youth of a Woman* as a film taking a particularly positive stance towards modernity, an attitude generally visible in many films of this post-independence period. Another element of *Youth of a Woman* is that the film belongs to Abu Sayf's realist repertoire for which he resorted to realist literature of the time, often aided by Nagib Mahfuz who also contributed to this film's scenario. For the analysis of the film, it is important to keep in mind the modernist messages that are embodied by the young bachelor pursuing an education in the city. He will go to university, a symbol of Western education, but he also combines this with his religiosity and his Islamic and Arab background and history. Simultaneously the film juxtaposes the lower class neighborhood, burdened by traditions and backwardness embodied by Shafa'at, with the modern city where the middle class acquaintances of the peasant boy Imam live. The spaces that the women in the film occupy are strongly related to their class, with the lower class *ma'allima* crossing the supposed boundaries of domestic and public spaces, while the middle class women are only depicted as women taking care of the household chores.

Hoda Elsadda (2006: 3) argues that the public-private binary with which Arab societies are sometimes described is a modernist construct, dating back to the 19th century discourses on modernity and the role of women in Arab society. She notes how the dominant stories of women's achievements are furthermore related to class, speaking mostly about and to, *some* middle class women. She continues, saying that "the lives of these women are directly influenced by mainstream representations about an imagined family where the husband is the head of the family [...] and women are assumed to be naturally inclined

towards performing household duties" (id. 4). This image is transposed onto the modern middle class family, while it does not seem to apply to the working class neighborhood where Shafa'at (and other women) are seen to be working outside the home. The public-private binary is non-existent in the *ḥāra*, as a place where women are usually portrayed as moving around freely: working, buying, and otherwise actively participating in public life.[8]

Tahiyya Carioca's character Shafa'at is not only a working woman, but she also occupies a position of power over her surroundings, and more specifically over Imam. Her power position is directly linked to her wealth, as well as her *bint al-balad* knowledge of the city and its mechanisms.[9] A third element that empowers her is her sexuality which entices the young and unexperienced male. Her money and property are central to her position of power over others, while her gender, age and sexuality play a role in asserting herself over the younger man. But her character is not only defined by her position of power. As *ma'allima* she performs two different gender identities, depending on the space she finds herself in. Towards the outside world, she performs a tough-guy attitude, a masculinity associated with coarse men. In private and towards Imam, the object of her desire, in particular, she puts on her feminine mask linked to her lower class personality.

Shafa'at's masculinity is most prominently performed when she handles her daily business, in her treatment of her employees and her renters. She handles them roughly, without any humanity or respect. Her masculine performance is delineated by her ability to impose her will and to control her business and surroundings. Her impression of a masculine performance is one of violence and coarse behavior, something she continues initially at home as well. The way she treats Imam indicates her stronger financial and social position vis-à-vis the man. At one point, she invites Imam for lunch. When the bill arrives,

8 In this regard, I also refer to previous chapters, particularly chapters 5 and 7, in which the *ḥāra* plays a prominent role.
9 Edward Said (2000) has written a beautiful article on Tahiyya Carioca's star persona as *'almeh*, the 'knowing' courtesan to rich, aristocratic men – a character she played before turning into the more manly and coarse *ma'allima*. See also chapter 4, footnote 16.

she tries to pass him money under the table, in order to uphold the impression for the other clients and the waiter that he, as a man, has paid for the food. Her 'scheme' fails, and the waiter takes the money from her hands, shouting sarcastically to the patron: "the bill is 60 (piasters), and the lady has paid for it!" Again, she remains in control, in part thanks to her wealth, but also because of her imposing gender performance towards Imam (and the waiter).

Her performance at home is later complemented by a softer side, albeit one riddled with eroticism. When she finds Imam enjoying a belly dancer during a *mūlid*,[10] she grabs his ear like a mother scolding her son, takes him back to her room and gives him a private performance of her belly dance skills. With minimal yet suggestive movements she entices Imam, as well as anyone watching the film. The dancing sequence starts with a bird view shot of the whole room and the two persons occupying it, ending with close-ups of their faces followed by a metaphorical sequence of images suggesting that Imam has 'scored' – similar to the director's Soviet montage techniques used in *The Tough Guy* (see chapter 5). Her femininity is, similar to her masculine performance earlier, not portrayed in positive terms, partly because her lower class character is associated with backwardness and traditionalism. Her female sexuality is represented as a threat and eventually lures the young man into her clutches.

Her femininity starkly opposes the one that Salwa embodies, Imam's youth friend and daughter of his family's acquaintances. This is not only emphasized by her typical middle class character, but also by the film's techniques. When Imam first meets Salwa, he hears her singing an Arabic song on the piano. Walter Armbrust (1995) has argued how elements of modernity are used in Egyptian film, synthesizing local elements (such as the colloquial language) with classicist elements of European or Arab history and culture. Although Salwa sings in colloquial Arabic, she simultaneously plays a modern 20th century song on the piano, a Western instrument. This opposes the traditional songs to which Shafa'at dances: old Arab stories that are

10 A *mūlid* is a saint's feast, held yearly across Egypt and typically near the saint's burial ground. These *mūlid*s are usually accompanied by festivities with dancers, storytellers, fortune tellers, merry-go-rounds and swings.

told accompanied by traditional instruments like the *nāy*, *rabbāba* or *ṭabla*. In addition, the camera portrays Shafa'at's body in suggestive ways, through close-ups and angles that emphasize her physicality. Salwa – although played by the beautiful singer and, occasionally, dancer Shadia – is portrayed from a distance, her body not sexualized or objectified, but glorified as the body of a young, pure, virgin.

Tahiyya Carioca's *ma'allima* performance is not only portrayed negatively. The actress and dancer capitalized on the success of *Youth of a Woman* in her role as *ma'allima* in Hasan Rida's *al-Ma'allima/The Ma'allima* (1958). In this film, both her masculine and feminine performances are positively depicted. Her masculinity consists of positively coded characteristics like protectiveness, willpower and trustworthiness, exemplified by her tough-guy stance towards her husband's midnight assailants (whom she successfully beats up, unlike her husband), or her *futuwwa*-like *gad'ana* and *shahāma* (integrity, wit and courage) when she visits her employee's sick mother. Also her sensual womanliness is positively represented when she dances for her husband, making sure he is cared for as well. Her feminine performance, rather than her masculine one, is here portrayed as a masquerade in order to conform to her husband's requirements. During the dance sequence, she momentarily masks her masculinity that she is otherwise inclined to perform.

The feminine masquerade that Tuha (a nickname for Tahiyya) in *The Ma'allima* and Shafa'at in *Youth of a Woman* perform constitutes an ambiguous gender identity. In private they perform one, in public they take on a whole different guise. Joan Rivière has shown in her essay *Womanliness as a Masquerade* (1929) that women already 'naturally' possess masculinity and only perform an exaggerated femininity (in public) in order to get along in a male-dominated society. But for the lower class *ma'allima* to occupy her space and hold on to it, she needs to perform more than merely her femininity. She is supposed to shed her public femininity, and let her masculinity prevail. Judith Butler extended the idea of gender performance, including the performance of masculinities, focusing on the iterative act of gender performativity: "gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (emphasis in

original, Butler 1990: 140). Thanks to Butler, it is possible to explain the *ma'allima*'s gendered acts through the space she inhabits. But, because masculinity is performed differently by the different characters in both films, it also reveals itself as a mask, as something that can be appropriated and performed. The *ma'allima* shows that both masculine and feminine performances are equally constructed and open to interpretation depending on the context, the person performing them, and those the performance is intended for.

The character also offers different ways of being female, as an independent, sexually confident woman. She furthermore transgresses spatial boundaries that patriarchy seems to have imposed on them. Yet, the problem arises once again when class comes into the picture. Shafa'at's masculine and feminine performances are associated with her lower class backwardness, opposing the dominant ideal of middle class propriety and modern education. This juxtaposition of lower versus middle classes is not present in Carioca's second film, *The Ma'allima*. Instead, the traditional *ḥāra* is positively depicted and the 'modern' city is only embodied by prostitutes in Western dress. Therefore, Tuha's masculine and feminine performances are imbued with positive characteristics like the *futuwwa*.

The question remains whether these women's public persona as a tough woman is at all exceptional in a patriarchal society that favors male toughness over female sensuality in public life. Furthermore, men's sexuality is not considered threatening. When women expose their sexuality in public they could be described as prostitutes; women's sexuality needs to be contained to the house and to the proper and socially accepted context of marriage. Whenever the *ma'allima* ventures outside the home, she needs to leave behind her femininity and sexuality[11] and adopt a more masculine posture and attitude in her interaction with others around her, whether men or women. If she is capable of doing so, her leadership and *gad'ana* will be

11 This is not to say that a *ma'allima* is per definition an asexual person, her sex and sexuality are simply no longer her foremost characteristic in public. Furthermore, sometimes a *ma'allima* can also be the leader or matriarchal figure of a dance troupe or even a prostitute ring. Yet again, as *ma'allima*, her sex and gender are not the characteristics that define her, her masculine public persona is what defines her.

accepted and respected. As a shop owner regularly interacting with customers (both women and men) and other shop owners in the neighborhood, her public persona's female masculinity is an essential property.

The *ma'allimāt*'s femininity is not denied to them, while they have to earn their masculinity based on their ability to properly imitate masculine and manly behavior, quite similar to the *futuwwa* (or the 'new' paternalist men of the most recent decade). What is more, their ability to do so is respected and expected once they venture outside. The *ma'allimāt*'s public presence is thus not necessarily a threat to male domination and masculine normativity; indeed, it might as well reinforce a patriarchal social order. Her presence is ambiguous; she is at once a strong, independent and confident woman capable of and allowed to take her slice of the cake. Her gender does not matter in this regard and the double space she occupies allows her to renegotiate the gender status-quo. But she also ventures into the male-dominated public space by imitating what is perceived to be a public gender norm: her masculine behavior is expected and judged for its authenticity. If we were to switch roles, for example a man who at home takes on roles traditionally associated with women like cooking and cleaning, this would be considered ridiculous – although men could perfectly participate in the household, also in Egypt.[12] In films, however, a man's masculinity might be jeopardized if he is portrayed participating in the household.[13]

9.1.2 God Knows Best

An adaptation to the *ma'allima* character is visualized in the later film *God Knows Best* (Husam al-Din Mustafa 1976). The *ma'allima* character

12 As a case in point is the view from my own balcony in downtown Cairo, looking down upon a crowded popular neighborhood lying behind the relatively structured main roads. On more than one occasion, men were hanging out the laundry to dry on the ropes stretched out beneath their flat's windows.

13 Inas al-Daghaydi's film *Pardon Me, Law!* (see later in this chapter), for example, explicitly portrays the male antagonist in this way: he is an impotent man who has 'lost' his masculinity; he even cooks in order to assert his dominance over his wife even within 'her' territory.

from the 50s that Tahiyya Carioca embodied was an example of an independent woman who stood up against male domination of the market place and performed a new way of being a woman. The later films with a *ma'allima* character were equally embedded in their political and social history, talking about similar topics as other films from that particular era. In the 70s the *ma'allima* engaged in criminal behavior such as drug dealing or other forms of criminal activities, similar to their male counterparts and often also in other spaces than the traditional local market we are familiar with in films of the 50s and early 60s. One of the reasons for this change is that décors of films from the 70s onward moved from the local neighborhood, the *ḥāra*, to the new city and buildings, the *'imāra*, built in the 60s. Samia Mehrez (2008) describes similar developments in literary production of the time as well, where the *'imāra* became the new symbolic space after the *ḥāra* which was prominent in Mahfuz' novels as a metaphor for the larger society.

Contrary to the previous film, *God Knows Best* is also a good example of a late 70s film that portrays a disbelief in modernist messages (Armbrust 1995). Where *Youth of a Woman* is positive about modernism and social progress, this next film is subtly negative about the Nasirist vision of progress. As shown in previous chapters, the anti-modernism visible in films after 1967 still employs the same 'codes of modernity' that Walter Armbrust has defined. In *God Knows Best*, similar codes are employed that are recognizable for an Egyptian audience with knowledge of Egyptian cinema. The most prominent of these codes is the juxtaposition of traditionalism and modernity. Education is depicted as a modernizing necessity to shed oneself of traditionalism and 'backwardness', yet the film also shows that it is less naïve about the romanticized stories of love and companionship as were earlier films. Thus, the educated woman in the film from a lower class background (Na'ima) continues to be haunted by her social status and background.

The director of *God Knows Best*, Husam al-Din Mustafa (1926-2000), is known for his popular melodramas, as well as his 'action films' such as the 80s *futuwwa*-films of which he directed several installments. Contrary to the famous directors Abu Sayf and Barakat, who both

studied cinema in Europe, Husam al-Din Mustafa traveled to the United States to continue his studies. His oeuvre covers the post-independence cinema, and his films are as such beautiful depictions of the specific timeframe in which they were made. The current film, *God Knows Best*, is a late 70s film (after the 'uplifting' 1973 war) that contains all the elements of this era: working women, pretentious middle classes, drugs, criminality, and an appropriate amount of action and melodrama which the director is most famous for.

The actress starring in the film, and portraying the *ma'allima* character, is Sana' Gamil (1930-2002). She is known for her many diverse performances, in comedic roles or as a protective mother (the latter is the case in the present film). In the 60s she acted important roles in films directed by some of the industry's most famous directors, particularly her performance in Abu Sayf's film *Dead Among the Living* in 1960. In it, she played the role of Nafisa, the daughter of a poor widow, who supports her family and her brother's expensive studies at the police academy. She won a prize at the Moscow Film Festival in 1961 as Best Supporting Actress for her role in that film. As an all-round actress, Nehad Selaiha (2002) describes Sana's star persona as a paradox. Both in real life and on stage, her character was comprised of opposites. She came from a small southern Egyptian town and had received French education at a catholic school, but soon left the village to study acting in Cairo without informing her family. Her stage presence, too, is equally mesmerizing. With commitment and persuasion she could perform, in Selaiha's words, "the poor victim, the dangerous wild-cat, and the clown" (Selaiha 2002). Her most recognizable features are her refined facial contours, capable of expressing sternness, motherly love, heartbreaking sadness or overwhelming joy with the same natural and convincing appeal.

In *God Knows Best* she plays the role of the *ma'allima* Umm Na'ima. The film is about conflict on different levels: generational, class, gender and – as a crime film – between police and criminals. Umm Na'ima contains all the characteristics described earlier: she is a tough masculine woman in the *ḥāra* or *ḥitta*[14] and a caring single mother at

14 Literally *ḥitta* means a piece, but it may also refer to a local neighborhood, similar to the *ḥāra*. It can also be used in extension for any area within the

home. Her motherhood is remarkably not denied to her, instead everybody refers to her as 'mother of Na'ima', Umm Na'ima, thus keeping in mind her sex and her status as a mother, while not ignoring her standing in the neighborhood as *ma'allima*. Not once is she addressed with her birth name, only with her given name,[15] not even during the court hearing at the end of the film. This makes it a very explicit reference to her motherhood, something that cannot be ignored. Another reason why she is addressed as 'mother of' is because her daughter Na'ima is one of the few educated people in the *ḥāra*. She is the only one who can read and is a successful lawyer. Na'ima is consistently addressed as *ustāza*, a generic polite form of address.[16] As such, her insistence on being called Umm Na'ima indicates the pride she takes in her daughter's formal education and high esteem as a respected lawyer.

Yet, the film portrays the paradox that many women faced and continue to face both in public and private life. Although the growing presence of women in public and the achievements made in terms of new laws and government schemes promoted women in universities and the work force (such as the lawyer, Na'ima), the personal status laws had barely changed since the 1920s. Thus, women were still dependent on male relatives, which further influenced their presence in public and freedom of movement. *God Know Best*, however, has a conspicuous absence of a father figure or a dominant male, who are instead replaced by two dominant matriarchs: Umm Na'ima the

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city in general. I am referring to it here because it is used in this particular film more often than *ḥāra*. For example, occasionally Na'ima is referred to as '*bint ḥittitna*' [litt. 'a daughter from our parts (of the city)'].

15 For that matter also Ahmad's (her daughter Na'ima's boyfriend and later fiancé) mother is never mentioned by name, only referred to as 'your mother' (*il-sitt il-wālda*) or 'Madame' (*yā sitt hānim*) by Umm Na'ima or as 'aunty' (*ṭanṭ*) by Na'ima.

16 *Ustāza*, or the masculine form *ustāz*, is translated by Badawi-Hinds as "a polite form of address or reference to, a teacher or to a man not otherwise qualified for a title". The neighborhood holds Na'ima in high esteem, treating her differently and less roughly than the inhabitants would each other. When one of Umm Na'ima's customers shouts at Na'ima and pushes her aside, the *ma'allima* kicks him out of her store; she will not let anyone come close to her daughter, particularly not the ruffians of the neighborhood.

ma'allima and Na'ima's fiancé's, Ahmad's, mother. The film touches upon the generational, class and gender conflicts on the level of the personal relationships between the lower class *ma'allima* and her gang, and the upper-middle class family of Ahmad, the investigating officer, who is initially addressed derogatorily as *Abū Shanab* (litt. father of a mustache, i.e. 'the one with the mustache').

The class, gender and generational conflicts intertwine in the way that Ahmad and Na'ima both encounter difficulties regarding their plan to get married. Na'ima, although a highly educated and working woman, is stopped by her mother from seeing Ahmad. Na'ima is thus met with the same paradox as outlined earlier: she can leave the house and the area for work, but her mother – safeguarding patriarchal order – withholds her from meeting with a strange man unless he officially proclaims his love for her and agrees to marry her. Ahmad's mother outright objects to the marriage because of Na'ima's lower social status; it does not matter that she is now a successful lawyer. Both mothers safeguard patriarchy: Umm Na'ima through her curbing of Na'ima's freedom of movement, Ahmad's mother through her vetoing the marriage in order to maintain her family's possessions. The young Na'ima and Ahmad, on the other hand, defy patriarchal rule through their modern understanding of male-female relationships and social vision.[17]

But Umm Na'ima is more than merely a mother. In her own way, she shows how it is possible to perform her womanliness in a different way: both she and her daughter are the only women who work in the film and yet who are not denied their femininity. Once again, the *ma'allima* performs a different gender identity in public than the one she performs at home, in private, with her daughter and, later in the

17 The modern concept of marriage as a bond between two mutually understanding individuals who love each other has been the topic of discussion for early 20th century Egyptian writers (Elsadda 2007). Part of the couple's mutual understanding in this film is related to the fact that Na'ima is a university-educated 'New Woman', the type of woman that liberal and reformist writers like Qasim Amin and Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid saw as the solution for the social and economic woes of the country in the late 19th, early 20th centuries. In films, as Viola Shafik writes (2007: 137), the modern ideal of a love marriage "was presented as the needle's eye through which those social limitations could be transgressed".

film, with her prospective in-laws. In public, however, Umm Na'ima (more so than the sensual Shafa'at or Tuha earlier), dresses, walks and talks like a man. Her public presence at the wedding party at the beginning of the film is indicative of this (and reminds of the comedy of the early 50s with Hagar Hamdi). During the wedding of one of the *ma'allimīn*, Zaki, she goes on stage with her stick, the *nabūt* (the traditional male status symbol), and money, publicly and with great fanfare declaring her support for the marriage and performing a short dance wielding her stick. Generally, only the men of the neighborhood go on stage and shower the couple with money, giving a short, yet enticing speech about the groom. The practice is comparable to the speech the best man of the groom would give in European weddings, but in this case with more than just one best man. As *ma'allima* she can do this, too; it is even expected from her, otherwise her public role as *ma'allima* might be jeopardized.

Umm Na'ima is perhaps a more successful example of female masculinity that is able to convince her surroundings and the audience of her *gad'ana* and *shahāma*, those characteristics attributed to only the 'best of men'. Men in this sense are once again not necessarily biological men, which this and other *ma'allimāt* prove. Umm Na'ima's leadership role of a criminal gang does not question her gender identity, considering the film focuses mainly on her role as a mother and as a leader within her neighborhood. The fact that she has worked hard to give her daughter the education she wanted and that she is the one who puts the crippled Gilgil to work in her store only serve to portray her even more strongly as *gada'a*. Furthermore, she has put the criminal money she had earned to good use, to pay for the education and upbringing of her daughter. As *ma'allima* she is also respected and stands at the top of the *ḥāra*: no man or woman has any authority over her. She also takes what comes to her with male stoicism – a characteristic she shares with the *ma'allima* Rayya some twenty years earlier in *Rayya and Sikina* when that murderous gang-leader was caught and subsequently hanged. But, by adhering to the assumption that women are naturally inclined to perform household duties and limit themselves to the private sphere, the films representing the 'tough woman' masculinity of the *ma'allima* in public and her

femininity and 'care' in private, eventually perpetuate a culturally accepted 'ideal' of 'indoors' womanhood and 'outdoors' manhood.

9.2 The case of female directors

Including a separate chapter on women directors risks putting their contributions in a separate box, as a 'different' cinema from the films I discussed in the previous chapters. I do not wish to belittle women's contributions to the industry or 'other' their work, on the contrary. Female directors, screenwriters and producers were very active in the early days of Egyptian cinema, prior to the consolidation of the industry. After the establishment of Egypt's largest studio, women as directors practically disappeared from behind the camera. This studio, Studio Misr, was founded by Tala'at Harb, who nevertheless acknowledged the importance of the work of these female pioneers (Hillauer 2005: 28). Viola Shafik (2007: 190-2) lists several reasons for their disappearance as directors, noting most prominently economic reasons such as the consolidation of the industry and producers' reluctance to invest large sums of money in what they believed was an insecure investment.

However, women continued to be very present in the industry on- and off-screen, mainly as producers and most prominently as actresses. Inas al-Daghaydi (1953-) was one of the first mainstream female directors in almost 50 years. Her films are controversial, partly because they are produced within the framework of mainstream cinema, partly because the media and audience continue to criticize her too blunt depictions of what are considered sex scenes in Egyptian cinema (Shafik 2007: 193). The late 80s also saw other female directors, for example Nadia Hamza and Asma' al-Bakri, although the latter's films were undeniably less commercial or popular because of the lack of stars (Hillauer 2005: 40). After these new 'pioneers', more women directors entered commercial and mainstream cinema, including Kamla Abu Dhikri and Sandra Nash'at in the late 1990s. These women's

presence remains, however, very limited compared to the number of men directing and producing mainstream films.[18]

In the following discussion of two of the most iconic women directors, I initially chose the films presuming that women directors depict gender dynamics differently from male directors. But this assumption would assume a straightforward and one-sided commercial film industry; yet, we have seen in the previous chapters that there has always been enough space for ambiguity and different readings of the films. I have chosen two of the most famous new pioneering women, namely Inas al-Daghaydi (1953-) and Nadia Hamza (1939-2012), who have made films within the same commercial framework, a film industry that is mainly in the hands of men. Producers and distributors – as well as some directors, actors and actresses – think commercially in terms of how much that particular film will *earn* them. This is not to deny any artistic value to commercial films, or to denounce the commercial film industry as entirely and solely interested in making money. Egypt's commercial film industry has a longstanding tradition of quality films discussing taboo topics for each timeframe in a possibly subversive manner, as evidenced in the previous chapters.

Furthermore, a discussion on the contribution of women directors to the male-dominated commercial industry puts both the women's and men's films into perspective: in how far does these women's presence constitute a feminist act, being those few remarkable 'exceptions' to an otherwise male-dominated industry? Yet, not only women made films critically approaching the 'woman question'. Men's contribution to issues related to women in Egypt or the Arab world is a remarkable feat, but from the previous chapters we notice that their films betray to some extent a middle class, bourgeois ideology when 'educating' the masses about gender relations in what they consider to be a 'modern Egypt'.[19] Hoda Elsadda questions the work of modernist

18 Outside the commercial cinema industry, mostly young, female directors are growing in numbers. The ease with which young directors can now express themselves using digital cameras is part of the reason why also women find it easier to participate in this growing and vibrant young film culture in Egypt.

19 Ehab el-Leithi (the former head of the Egyptian Radio and Television Unit,

Arab writers who have written extensively about women's roles in a modern Egypt. Through what is written about women's roles, she analyzes what is intended for and expected of 'modern men' as well (Elsadda 2007). In films discussing women's positions in society and the difficulties they face because of traditions or the domination of men we can also discern an indirect discourse about male roles in society. Now I want to have a look at what women directors have to say and show about themselves and about the roles of men and women in society, keeping in mind the commercial and male-dominated framework of the industry.

The first film under discussion is al-Daghaydi's film *Pardon Me, Law!* from 1985. It is her first film, she also produced it herself, and it talks about the unequal implementation of the law vis-à-vis men and women. Although al-Daghaydi refuses to be called 'feminist', not wanting to be reduced to her gender as a director (Hillauer 2005: 84), she has nevertheless always tended to topics like gender relations and abuse (Shafik 2007: 193-5). The second director is Nadia Hamza, whose film *A Woman and a Woman* (1995) will also be discussed here. Women – with different class backgrounds – take a prominent role in the film, as the title suggests, although at first sight the film proposes rigid gender roles for women as 'mother or whore'. Generally, class plays a central role in the relations that develop between the characters in these films, whereas lower classes are depicted as a dark and ignorant cloak one wants and needs to shed. Nevertheless, the complexity of both films goes beyond mere class differences that seem to suggest yet another middle class feminist agenda. The visual presence of women on-screen in diverse roles guiding the plot might be considered a feminist act in and of itself. But the analysis will once again not limit

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ERTU) is quoted in Lila Abu-Lughod, saying that "our [the ERTU] most important goal in relation to citizens is to help individuals become cultured. We must educate them, teach them the basics of morality and religious duty" (Abu-Lughod 2005: 11). His remark is informed by class differences, as well as a rigid one-way understanding of the relationship between media production and consumption. Abu-Lughod further shows the different possible readings and audience reactions to what appears on television (or in films, for that matter), arguing that "the way people respond depends both on the experiences they have on the ground and the alternative discourses they have available to them" (id. 14).

itself to a description of gender roles, rather the gender dynamics and relations will be discussed in these films made by women.

9.2.1 The four punishments of Huda in Pardon Me, Law!

Inas al-Daghaydi's first film is one that discusses the law's discrimination between men and women, including complex issues of personal status and criminal laws and the differences between the local and historical laws of shari'a versus the 'modern' laws from the early 19th century. The film offers a discussion on the post-colonial context in a post-*infitāḥ* era where 'modernity' – with images of a prosperous nation – remains no longer unchallenged. Indeed, like the other films from the 80s (see chapter 7) *Pardon Me, Law!* is no longer advancing the belief in modernism that we could discern in films from the Nasir-era. Especially the film's disentanglement of the double law system in Egypt – shari'a and 'secular' law – is an important element in its discussion on what a new Egypt built on equality should look like. Considering the director's secular stance, her going back to new interpretations of shari'a law as a means to advance women's rights is stunning.[20]

The main actress in *Pardon Me, Law!* is Nagla' Fathi, whose melodramatic depictions of troubled and abused women remind of the 'First Lady of the Arab Screen', Fatin Hamama. Nagla' Fathi (1951-) herself considers Fatin Hamama her example, and Fathi's similar innocent expressions make her a close contender of Fatin Hamama's other nickname, 'angel without wings'. Similarly, she acts melodramas and romantic films, playing the part of the abused and victimized woman, in such a way that her four punishments in this film come as no surprise and further strengthen her star persona's image. She has

20 Walter Armbrust describes the representational politics of Islamism in Egyptian cinema, and argues how "[n]o endorsement of Islam as a political alternative is allowed in cinema or in public sector media" (2011: 238). This is also related to the producers' worldview, rather than merely an effect of censorship. Al-Daghaydi's portrayal of Islamic law seems informed by her own background and idea that Islam can, in fact, offer an alternative to the colonial era personal status laws that have only barely changed. In her own way, she counters the dominant traditionalist interpretations and – in her view – patriarchal abuse of Islamic shari'a.

acted in some of the most critically lauded films of major Egyptian directors, like Muhammad Khan, Inas al-Daghaydi and Asma' al-Bakri, but has decided in the late 1990s to stop acting after a number of unsuccessful productions. According to her, her husband's political background and disagreement with the Mubarak regime was the reason behind halting her latest film and television productions.[21]

The narrative of *Pardon Me, Law!* revolves around a newly married couple, Huda (played by Nagla' Fathi) and 'Ali (Mahmud 'Abd al-'Aziz), who tells his young wife during the wedding night that he is impotent.[22] According to him, a relationship based on mutual respect and love is more valuable than the 'extra' sexual activities marriage involves. All goes well in the beginning, but soon Huda is unable to withhold her sexual desires and she urges her husband to go and see a doctor. It turns out he has a mental condition ever since he saw his stepmother being murdered by his own father, 'Abd al-Qawi, while in bed with a lover. As such, he associates sex with death and thus is unable to have sexual relations himself. His wife will try to cure him by psychoanalyzing him. The result is, however, a sexually 'over-active' and adulterous male who has sex with a mutual friend of the couple, Lubna. When Huda finds both in their marital bed, thinking initially a robber is in the house, she too shoots them after which the film centers on both the law's and society's discrimination against Huda who in fact re-enacted 'Ali's trauma. Upon shooting her husband – who will eventually die after a painful week in hospital – Huda receives her

21 Fu'ad, Rawda, available from: http://www.elcinema.com/news/nw678935617/ (acc. June 20, 2014).
22 Impotence is a returning motif in Egyptian films, like for example the 'Adil Imam comedy *al-Nom fi al-'Asal/Honeymoon Nights* (Sharif 'Arafa 1996)and the more serious new realist film *The Necklace and the Bracelet* by 'Ali Badrakhan (1986). Men's failing sexual performance returns in other films, like Muhammad Abu Sayf's *The Ostrich and the Peacock* (2002) or in al-Daghaydi's *Lobster* (1996) with the popular actor Ahmad Zaki. In each of the films, men's sexual performance is constructed as an essential part of their gendered identity. Sexuality (both male and female) is in general depicted as integral to one's gender, and, apart from the occasional exception, portrayed in a heteronormative binary. Nevertheless, the available exceptions with depictions of transvestism or homosexuality are in my opinion proof of the instability and uncertainty that constitutes and revolves around this binary.

first fateful punishment, being hit by a car after she ran out of the house.

The film discusses several political subjects, like the topic of discriminatory personal status laws – which were initially perhaps considered 'modern' laws but which were in the late 70s adapted. [23] During 'Abd al-Nasir's rule, several laws were passed to advance women's presence in public space, with equal rights to vote and equality in pay and work.[24] In the 70s new discussions arose about the status of women in the private sphere. Since the personal status laws were not changed under 'Abd al-Nasir, there remained a lot of work to be done in this regard (Hatem 1992: 231-3; Elsadda 2006: 4). Films from the 70s started incorporating discussions on women's rights in the private sphere, at the same time that topics like female adultery in middle class families were hot irons in Egyptian cinema.[25] Sabrina Joseph (2009) links this interest in topics regarding 'female criminal behavior' to new discourses in newspapers in the late 60s about working middle class women and university students participating in prostitution (id.: 84, referencing Safia Mohsen 1991: 68).

The film challenges these personal status laws – based on secular European laws issued shortly after Egypt's nominal independence of Britain in 1922 – instead urging for a reconsideration and reinterpretation of shari'a law. During the court case at the end of the film, Huda's lawyer demands the judges to implement Islamic shari'a since it does not discriminate between adulterous men or women, or between anyone who committed murder. 'Abd al-Qawi's presence as

23 The film *Uridu Hallan/I Want A Solution* from the hand of director Sa'id Marzuq, feminist screenwriter Husn Shah and with the star Fatin Hamama is a famous example in this regard. For more details regarding this film and its influence on government policies, I refer to chapter 6, footnote 28.
24 The film *Li-l-Rigal Faqat/For Men Only* by Fatin 'Abd al-Wahhab (1964) is exemplary of the new laws encouraging women to work outside the home. The film talks about two women dressing up like men because the director would not allow them to travel to an oil rig expedition. The women were obviously certain of their case and finally found oil, which the men were unable to do.
25 A film like Henry Barakat's *A Woman With a Bad Reputation* discusses this topic critically, without resorting to sheer disapproval regarding the adulterous woman (see also chapter 7).

the family's patriarch (played by the ever-masculine brute, Farid Shawqi) takes on the role of abusive father figure who imposes his traditionalist and patriarchal views on the role of men and women, abusing the law to his advantage while hypocritically ignoring Huda's rights as the victim of an adulterous partner. The other male characters in this film are no where close to patriarchs, though initially claiming social and legal privileges as men.

While women are centralized in the film's plot, men's roles and depictions are patriarchal, negative, and, it is important to note, unmanly. 'Ali – when shot and trying to recover in hospital – repents and writes a statement to help his wife, saying to her lawyer: "she made me capable of cheating on her", a little joke only 'Ali and the viewer understand. Repentance is not enough, and 'Ali eventually dies before being able to redeem his wife's actions. Salah, Lubna's husband, claims high and low that his "honor cannot be bought", though in the end he returns to her and accepts his subjected position. The only male capable of asserting his dominance, is 'Abd al-Qawi. Yet, the plot's focus on the man's hypocrisy puts him in a negative light as well. Indeed, Farid Shawqi's star persona who regularly played the 'bad guy' in his younger years is used here to put him in the role of abusive father figure.[26] Huda's stoic acceptance of her fate and punishment puts her in a morally superior position and perhaps portrays her as a woman in control, repenting her transgression of the law and accepting its consequences. Together with her rational character and attitude towards her husband's illness – who himself childishly and emotionally rejects any kind of help – Huda's role as a woman (as a supporting wife and mother) is portrayed positively while the different men's concept of male roles and masculinity prove once again self-

26 In an article about al-Daghaydi's newest film, *Silence* (about an abusive father who sexually assaults his daughter), her screenwriter claims that the censorship committee demanded they would portray the father as "mentally diseased and thus, unrepresentative of the general Egyptian male figure" (Abdel Rahman 2012). It is disturbing to know that criticism of a 'father figure', questioning his 'good judgment' and subverting his hegemony is a difficult task that might result in censorship. Knowing this could, however, put certain characters and plot twists into perspective, for example the noticeable absence of fathers in some films, or the exceptional presence of father figures in others.

destructive or are exposed as profiteering from unequal patriarchal power structures.

The relationship between the film's main characters, Huda and 'Ali, starts as a platonic relationship, portrayed as an ideal and caring relationship based on equality because of the absence of sex and their true love for each other. Yet, it does not take long before 'Ali resorts to asserting his dominant position – albeit at home and in the kitchen. He decides on how she cooks, which pills she takes, or where she goes and whom she meets. At a certain point he slaps her because she accused him of "not wanting to be a man". His actions are inspired by what he perceives to be his 'natural' masculine performance. He has always been impotent, never able to discover and develop his sexuality during his puberty. His masculine performance is the epitome of a social construct and as such it is exposed as a masquerade, symbolically maintained through his mustache: his 'natural' manly behavior (as a sexual *actor*) is denied to him, which he tries to balance by donning a thick mustache. The shaving of his mustache the morning after he has sex for the first time in his life and in his marriage is a strong symbol for him finally enabled to center his masculinity on a physical addendum other than his mustache.

Although 'Ali is harshly punished by death, Huda is punished on several levels too. The first 'punishment', physical, she receives is when she is hit by the car; the second punishment, moral, takes place in hospital, when society unanimously judges *her* for having shot her husband and his lover on the spot. One of the onlookers commented on her actions with the words: "She kills him just like that? Who is she, Rayya and Sikina?", referring to the two murderous sisters from Alexandria. Her third punishment, legal, happens at court, when Huda is sentenced to fifteen years forced labor – a stark difference with 'Abd al-Qawi's one year suspended sentence for the same crime. The fourth punishment is the final blow – by now she has accepted her fate compliantly – when 'Abd al-Qawi takes away her son with another court order. As a woman, she is punished on multiple levels, physically, morally, and legally; as a mother she is punished with the worst that could happen to her when her son is forcefully removed from her.

Opposed to the films in the previous chapters where men were often depicted as victims, aided by a narrative that privileges their misery and redeems their actions, this film's narrative is entirely occupied by Huda who is the main *actor* pushing the narrative forward. The film does not, however, employ a 'crisis of women'-rhetoric, instead empowering women through its social critique. From the start, the film opens with images of Huda packing her bags and preparing herself for the marriage and honeymoon. The film places great emphasis on the opening scenes, the wedding and the wedding night, and particularly Huda's role and reactions in the developments through repeated shot-reverse-shots that emphasize her facial expressions. The audience is required to develop sympathy for her, rather than 'Ali, because of her central part in the plot. Huda drives the narrative: she finds a medical doctor for 'Ali, she contacts a psychologist, she is able to remote-psycho-analyze him and cure him, and she is the one who takes revenge on his unfaithful and ungrateful actions. The narrative goes to great lengths to redeem Huda's upcoming murderous actions because of all the sacrifices she as a loving and caring wife makes for her ungrateful husband.

Although she is cast in the role of a wife and mother, the film's main focus on the private rights of women (following the 1960s-films' focus on women's public rights as equals to men in society) together with the director's use of "textual female masculinity",[27] make this a film that has the potential to subvert the normative nature of male domination. Yet, Heiny Srour notes that the film's adherence to conventional narrative strategies common for commercial melodrama eventually forgoes its initial critical purpose (Srour 1994: 134). Therefore, the focus on the depiction of Huda as a mother and faithful

27 "Textual female masculinity" was described by Hekanaho as "a structural and textual principle that pervades [their] fiction", referring to two women writers' novels (Hekanaho 2006: 11). In practice this means that certain ways of writing – or in this case directing – can be considered a 'masculine' style. Hekanaho – referencing Michael Davidson (2004: 169) – warns for replicating a dyadic gender order. Instead, textual female masculinity places the text somewhere in between feminine and masculine writing. Fatima Mernissi (1989: 13) claims that writing and analysis are exclusively male tools "in our culture", and as a woman writer she thus ventures into male territory, using 'their' tools to get along.

wife is similar to the victimization of women in melodramas of the 50s and 60s (but also before and after this period). Idealized and victimized, these depictions of women fit into the mold of generic film narratives.

Nevertheless, on the narrative level as well as in the number of female characters, *Pardon Me, Law!* offers more than idealized or victimized images of women, contrary to Srour's critique of the use of genre conventions. One such feature of textual masculinity is the subversion of roles as to which character has to die for his/her transgression. Although admitting her adulterous relationship with 'Ali to the court officials, Lubna leaves the courtroom as a free woman while her husband is unable to 'punish' her because it would hurt him even more. 'Ali, on the other hand, dies for the actions he committed. This is in stark contrast to the otherwise 'lesser' punishments for men in other commercial films. Ishaq Tijani (2005) notes that by not allowing the victim-husband any input in the narrative, the (female) author actually 'kills' the male, while the narrative voice is reserved for the heroine (id. 55-6). The same is true in this film where 'Ali's narrative is subjugated to Huda's, killing the man's dominant voice, while he dies in the plot, too.

9.2.2 A Woman and a Woman

Compared to Inas al-Daghaydi, Nadia Hamza is a more activist, albeit a less popularly known, director. Yet, she was the first female director after a long disappearance of women in this field: her film *Bahr al-Awham/Sea of Illusions* of 1984 was the first film directed by a woman since the pioneers of the 20s through 40s. Nadia Hamza, contrary to al-Daghaydi, calls herself a feminist filmmaker and associates herself with the genre of women films (*sīnimā al-mar'a*), arguing that directors should stop depicting women how society wants them to be, but rather as they are, opposing the popular image of the morally superior heroines in many Egyptian melodramas (Hillauer 2005: 86). Many of the films feature female leads and a few are autobiographic, usually with a heroine named after herself. Hamza's films can be read as empowering to women – as working women and single mothers who have to go through great lengths to ensure their children's upbringing

or assert their position in a man-dominated workplace, not accidentally also the director's own reality as a woman in the male-dominated film industry.

The current film, *A Woman and A Woman*, is – as the title suggests – about two women; one is the upper class, educated and wealthy actress Nadia (played by Safiyya al-'Imari, 1949-), the other is the lower class, uneducated, unmannered and pregnant Muna (Dilal 'Abd al-'Aziz, 1960-). Nadia takes an emotional stance toward the seemingly helpless Muna, who claims her husband left her as soon as he heard she was pregnant. Eventually Nadia will take Muna in, against the advice of her personal assistant, while also upsetting Nadir, the man who loves her and has been waiting to marry her until she herself is ready for it. When Muna gives birth to a girl, she calls her Nadia as well, ultimately creating a bond between the two women and the newborn. Muna soon starts to abuse Nadia's love for the child and, as it turns out, Muna had been lying about her past: her husband is a not too wealthy taxi driver whom she had left for a career in cinema. Nadia Sr. is powerless now that the girl is born; she will do anything in order to keep Muna and Nadia Jr. in her home.

It is not a coincidence that there are essentially three Nadia's in this film: Nadia Sr., Nadia Jr., as well as the director herself, Nadia Hamza, which makes the film partly autobiographic. Malek Khoury mentions that modernist self-reflexivity is one of the characteristics of *New Arab Cinema* (Khoury 2005: 15-6), and the director is well aware of her presence as a director, too. She also wants to make sure that the audience is conscious about her presence, which is why she makes an appearance as the director of a film-within-the-film. Similarly the film makes references to the Egyptian film industry, including a poster of Safiyya al-'Imari's earlier film on the walls (*al-Sharisa/The Vicious Woman*, by Sa'id Saqr 1993). The role of Nadia's servant Gamalat (played by the famous stage comedian 'Aysha al-Kilani) is equally interesting. She too aspires a career in the cinema industry (which she has already in reality), although Nadia's assistant Layla continuously reminds her of her unfortunate looks and silly naivety. For an informed audience, these constant references to the industry and its famous actors are comic intermezzos.

The film's portrayal of the class differences between Nadia Sr. and Muna is initially stereotypical, with seemingly positive depictions of the wealthy and educated class Nadia stems from, in contrast to the boorish nature of the lower class Muna. On several occasions, Muna is ridiculed, either because of her inability to pronounce certain words, her lack of acting talent, or because she is generally loud and unrefined. Her lower class boorishness is always there, even when she dresses up in Nadia's stylish clothes or when she puts on an act during the shooting of films. She stands in contrast to the more refined nature of the famous actress, singer and dancer Nadia. Muna's class is also an important element in the narrative of the film, as an explanation for the young and aspiring woman to get out of the circle of poverty which she has lived in most of her life. Depicting lower class women selling their bodies might be an indication of the extreme desperation certain women feel – the need to take care of their families but also being cast in a rigid mould of acceptable roles for women. Another reading of the unfolding events is that the film is critical about Muna's loss of humanity and any sense of manners. According to film critic Hasan Haddad (1986), Nadia Hamza has a knack for discussing matters of humanity and principles in her films, although ultimately her main focus is on women (and men) constructing their own identities and futures different from common perceptions in society and representations thereof in films.

A Woman and a Woman suggests different roles for men and women in society, allowing for different masculine and feminine performances. The gender roles that the film reserves for men and women are initially recognizable: mothers pitted against vicious career-women, fathers against bachelors. But there is something unsettling. The biological mother, Muna, is not the one who takes on the role of a mother figure in the plot. Nadia, although cast as a 'provider' in this unusual relationship because of her wealth, takes care of the baby. However, her excessive care for someone else's baby is not totally void of self-interest, knowing that she can no longer have children after a faulty abortion. Muna, abusing Nadia's willingness to support her, could thus be considered more masculine in her behavior

and attitude towards others around her, interested only in her career and not concerned with her daughter's upbringing.

Although the title suggests only two women are of importance, there are more women present in the film's plot and each of them takes on an essential part of what are usually associated with female roles in society. The film suggests the need of four women performing all the tasks and duties which are usually associated with women. The director hereby points out that the tasks women do on a daily basis could easily be divided over several fulltime working women. Nadia Sr. is not only the 'provider' in the unusual relationship; she is also the caring mother, day and night. Muna, the biological mother of the child, performs the role of a pleasing object. As a woman, it is not only expected of her to be a mother, but also to simultaneously perform an adequate amount of femininity in order to please her husband. The husband has been replaced by the camera and instead she pleases the eye in general. Nadia's two assistants (Layla and Gamalat) are responsible for the management of the household and the women's careers. Generally, all these tasks are expected of women in their roles as mothers and wives, contributing to the economy through their unpaid labor at home. By dividing the labor over these four women, the director nevertheless makes a strong point regarding these idealizations in popular culture and society of women and women's roles.

Although women take the lead in both the narrative and in terms of screen presence, the film has a lot to say about male roles and masculine performances as well. Masculinity in the film is not automatically associated with violence and misogyny – although teasing with common perceptions thereof – but with compassion, understanding and respect for women and women's choices. The lower class father figure, Farid, is not the runaway coward and brute who left his pregnant wife as Muna had said to Nadia. On the contrary, he is an understanding man and a father who does not want to create a scandal – neither for his wife, nor for the famous actress Nadia. Muna's husband Farid and Nadia's fiancé Nadir are both depicted not as masculine brutes but rather as men in touch, perhaps, with their feminine side. These men are portrayed as an ideal, a kind of

masculinity to strive for, although this does not necessarily lead to rewards either. In this way, the film questions men's active role – they have no hand in the narrative development – as well as a presumed heteronormativity that is destabilized and deconstructed in the film in favor of the unusual women-only household.

Furthermore, the film is more than a generalizing and stereotypical depiction of middle class values versus lower class uneducated brutes. It transcends these distinctions based on class and gender. The director is quoted in a leading Egyptian newspaper, saying "women's characters should be represented as they are and not as society thinks they ought to be" (Hillauer 2005: 86). The director portrays the media's insistence on women's objectification through the 'film within a film', the scenes in which the actress Nadia Sr. performs the two opposites of most common roles associated with women in film: the first as an overly caring mother, the second as a sexy dancer and object of the camera's gaze. As a consequence, Nadia's female roles are scrutinized and portrayed as artificial. Through the emphasis on her on-screen female performances – no matter how it manifests itself – *A Woman and a Woman* betrays the performance and the mask that Nadia puts on in front of the camera and raises questions about gendered performances in film in general.

Yet, the film is ambiguous in its portrayal of gender roles and its 'division of labor' allocated to the four women in the narrative. By distributing the work load over several characters, the film seems to ignore the reality that many women – not only in Egypt or the Arab world at large – find themselves in. Soheir Morsy relegates the disinterest of researchers and policy-makers with women's unpaid labor to Eurocentric definitions that distinguish between public and private domains, and formal and informal economies. This eventually leads to a trivialization of women's work and "hides not only women's domestic labour, but also their more 'public' contribution to the so-called informal sector; as well as their double burden of domestic and non-domestic work" (Morsy 1990: 90). If the director wished to critique the male-dominated cinema industry that has difficulty with engaging and employing women, as she herself has experienced, then this message does not come across. It furthermore ignores the experiences

of other women – as actresses mainly, but also as directors – who do combine motherhood or a married life with their careers in cinema, such as Inas al-Daghaydi, Fatin Hamama, Nadia al-Gindi, and many more.

On the other hand, the focus in *A Woman and a Woman* is on the emotional stress that being a woman in contemporary Egypt (the 90s) entails. This is a time in which women had gained a few legal rights such as the custody over their children (until the age of 15)[28] and the abolishment of the police-enforced 'house of obedience'-law.[29] Both elements are discussed in the film, albeit through Muna's abuse of the law in order to prohibit her husband from seeing their daughter. Furthermore, the film's position within the larger structure of commercial Egyptian cinema should not be ignored. The modernist self-reflexive aspects of the film, successful or not, suggest that the director tries to convene a female point of view of what it means to be a woman in Egypt and a female director in a male-dominated film industry. Many male directors – as we have seen in earlier chapters – have contributed to the 'woman question' and through it also give clear markers of Egyptian male identity. Here, we get an insight from a woman's point of view, stressing the emotional pressure on women from the part of society to concentrate on their role as mothers and housewives. Men's agency is limited and heteronormativity is challenged in a film with a clear female authoritative voice and women's omnipresence on screen. Yet, the subversion is watered down, as the director reinforces female gender roles as a choice between being a mother or a selfish 'bitch'; there really is no other way to describe Muna. Perhaps the director wished to criticize the social

28 An amendment of the law in 2005 stipulated the right to custody for women until the age of 15 and the husband's right to visit was set to three hours per week.

29 The 'house of obedience' (*bayt al-ṭāʿa*) is an old law, based on a patriarchal understanding and abuse of Islamic principles, in which a husband can force his wife to return to the home, enforced by the police until 1967. The law still exists, but the police can no longer enforce it (Mahshour 2005: 581-2). The 'house of obedience' also requires the husband to provide a room with water and a bed as basic needs until the wife is adequately admonished.

limitations on women to give up their career in favor of their 'traditional' role as housewives and mothers, yet through the portrayal of these double-protagonist's life choices she actually does just that and ignores the possibility (and reality) of being all that: a mother, a wife and a career-woman.

9.3 Discussion

This last chapter has tried to contextualize representations of masculinity by including a specific type of female masculinity as well as a discussion on a few iconic films made by women directors and screenwriters. Gender dynamics are shown to fluctuate and change, and relations of power are not always and necessarily linked to gender, rather than class or economic power. The metanarratives of state ideology in these films are prominent, something which became particularly obvious in this chapter since it included an analysis of films from different eras, and as such might also be read as a general conclusion to this study.

The *ma'allimāt* are independent women who in their own way cope with their specific surroundings, constructing their identities in ways similar to men's. Yet, it is mostly thanks to their status as free entrepreneurs that they are able to demand respect and compete with (mainly) men in the *ḥāra*. The *ma'allimāt* are also examples of how women can sustain social bonds with men, transgressing the common perception of Egypt as a segregated society. The way their masculine performance is represented shows their ability – if appropriately adapted – to participate in the public arena, usually regarded as male-dominated arenas and represented as such. Particularly these women's presence in public and the way they construct their own support networks show how the binaries of public and private spheres, formal versus informal sectors, paid and unpaid labor are arbitrary. Yet, they are also required to perform a certain public persona, imitating what is perceived as 'proper' behavior in public, in other words, to 'walk and talk like a man'. Particularly their insistence on violence – if required – is a somewhat disturbing perception of what is deemed manly. As El-Messiri demonstrates, these performances are not only popular

representations of the *ma'allima*'s female masculinity, but they are also real lower class female identities.

As *Youth of a Woman* showed, the exaggerated masculine and feminine performance of Tahiyya Carioca's star persona as lower class urban woman was portrayed as undesirable. The feminine ideal is embodied by Shadia's character Salwa, the middle class bourgeois virgin girl who has had proper education and is an exemplar of love and care. Yet, in the film *The Ma'allima*, Tahiyya Carioca was able to positively portray the *gada'a* and *baladi* woman, physically, emotionally and psychologically standing by her husband no matter the latter's mistakes. Another positive portrayal of the *ma'allima* is Sana' Gamil's performance in *God Knows Best*. *Gada'a* and tough in public and a caring mother in private, her performance shows in the first place that it is possible for women to have a career or to work outside the home and having multiple responsibilities and a complex construct of identity beyond the usual roles layed out for women. Second, her performance is a positive example of an independent woman who needs no men in her life. Rightfully she takes pride in having been able to single-handedly raise her child and offer her the best education money could buy. But her gender performance also somehow reinforces cultural expectations of male and female behavior in public and private respectively, making it once again an ambiguous read and perpetuating male/female, public/private binaries.

In the second part of the chapter I have dealt with two of the most prolific pioneering women directors of the 80s. For these women it was and is not always easy to construct a female narrative in a male-dominated industry. They nevertheless make a difference, using the tools at hand, sometimes therefore having to give up a more expressive and original criticism and resorting to what Srour (1994) calls a 'conventional style'. Although male-dominated, the 'plights of women' have never been neglected in Egyptian cinema, as we have seen in earlier chapters. Being a man is not simply accepted as a marker for his identity or hegemonic rule, indeed strong criticism was present in many films. Still, the normative element of an idealized masculinity was never truly questioned, which these women directors have tried to do by inverting their films' narratives. But al-Daghaydi

for example refuses to accept the description 'feminist' for her films, contrary to Nadia Hamza (Hillauer 2005: 84), signaling that the former's films are meant solely to offer her artistic point of view on gender relations in society, for example the discriminatory law in *Pardon Me, Law!*, or polygamy in *Dantilla* from 1995 (id. 59). But it also means that the director does not want to associate herself entirely with women issues, trying to avoid a discussion on her gender as an integral part of her way of filmmaking. However, her presence, her films' topics and female narrative authority already constitute a feminist act.

The contributions of women as directors to the industry are important elements to continue to include a female narrative and a woman's point of view on not only gender relations, but society as a whole, with the potential for more equal representations of men and women. Nadia Hamza's film sets out to do just that, with unconventional male performances and representations of female-dominated households. In a way, her film tries to make gender relations more equal, and challenge our common perceptions of those relations. The director's known history in filmmaking discussing matters of humanity and principles stand out in this film as well. But ultimately her project remains ambiguous in its representation of masculine and feminine identities, linking Muna's boorish nature and unprincipled character to her lower class background and Nadia Sr.'s refinement to her upper class upbringing and lifestyle. Furthermore, the director ambiguously divides women's labor in the film over multiple characters, ignoring the reality of many women of being more than either a mother or a career woman, but being all this at once. Nevertheless, her film is in any case a refreshing look on stereotypical depictions of men and women in Egyptian cinema, similar to Inas al-Daghaydi's films.

Conclusion

Masculinity, for a long time taken for granted, has been proven to be all but natural, stable or normative. Since Connell's assertion of multiple masculinities and the power relations that work between them (and between femininities), masculinity is no longer considered as a set of traits that some men might possess and others not, although specific traits are certainly considered more masculine than others. Masculinities are as much the result of power relations fluctuating in a historical space and time, creating changing and sometimes contradictory hegemonic masculinities, to make meaning of our everyday lives in a gendered system based on heteronormative binaries. But masculine identities are also subject to change, for example through mediated images of men and masculinities promoting certain types of men as hegemonic, portraying others as marginalized or subversive. Yet, when it comes to Arab men, popular discourse often restricted them to narrow and stereotypical notions of masculinity and manliness, particularly in Western media. A racialized discourse grounded in an orientalist and paternalist stance toward the Arab world continued to depict Arab men as violent, misogynist, homophobic, extremist and problematic, not giving them the same scholarly 'treatment' as Western men.

Arab men's hypervisibility in popular (Western) media was for me a starting point to investigate popular representations of Arab (Egyptian) men in one of the largest film industries of the Middle East and North Africa. Egypt's film industry has shaped popular conceptions of Arab men and masculinity across the Arab world, particularly in the 1940s through 60s when the country was a major cultural center in the region. Also in more recent decades the industry has continued to produce popular images of Arab and Egyptian men. Although the films were and are in the first place aimed at a local market, contributing to the creation of a national, Egyptian, identity. The images that the industry presented – as we have seen – were and are varied. Melodramatic realist films from the 50s and 60s conveyed a new discourse on gender relations in 'Abd al-Nasir's socialist Egypt.

Emphasizing on the one hand the rural peasant who was the victim of an unjust feudal monarchy, and on the other hand the modern, educated, middle class male, Egyptian films from the period after the independence in 1952 constructed male (and female) identities that would form the backbone for the nation's ideal of progress and social equality.

In a time when gender relations were part of a public debate in the 50s and 60s, women gained more rights in the public space, to vote, to study and to work. This rethinking of gender relations in the public sphere was not accompanied by more personal freedom for women within the family, however. Many films did represent these incongruities between the private and public spheres, though heralding in the first place the progress women had supposedly made in the fields of work outside the home. Ideal men were also part of the representational politics: men who respect women and do not abuse patriarchal notions of gender difference – often abusing religion and tradition in the process – in order to curb women's freedom of movement. These men, types like the *ma'allim*, occasionally portrayed by Farid Shawqi or 'Adli Kasib, were depicted as brutes and in need of a proper 'education' in order to become valued citizens and be part of a well-oiled and functioning society. But, in the aftermath of the 1967 war, the myths of modernity were exposed and the messages of social progress espoused by the media's intentional 'development realism' (Abu-Lughod 2005: 81) were no longer welcomed, nor desired. The ideal images of men and women were now under scrutiny, and the film industry too would bring messages of Egyptian men and women as flawed, defeated, without direction, at a loss.

The 70s epitomized on the new discourses of social crisis, not only for society as a whole but also for men and in women in particular. The message was clear: men in the 70s were either victims of the missed opportunities of the former regime, or they were able to adapt themselves and appropriate the new ideals of materialism and consumerism under the veneer of a 'modern lifestyle'. Men were well-groomed and a dominant position was occupied by the businessman, a successful and wealthy man capable of providing for his family. Notions of romantic love were no longer the outcome, although they

continued to be idealized: defying the hegemonic businessman was the (marginalized) ideal of the educated professional, the true object of desire of the abused women in the films, such as the future doctor or engineer, not coincidentally professions that could assist in constructing the country's prosperous future as they used to do in the 50s and 60s. Although Bouzid (1995: 245) claimed the commercial nature of Egypt's industry caused its potential for a 'new cinema' to succumb to the same commercial patterns during the 1970s, films from this period offered insights into the destruction rather than construction of the male as a national subject, as father, husband, soldier or worker.

The role strain men experienced was extended to their 'inner selves' of men as providers. The expectations society had (and continues to have) of men had not changed, yet the possibility to live up to them was increasingly problematic. In the 80s, films longed for stability, security and social equality embodied by the masculine ideal of the *futuwwa*. But, with a return to more 'realist' filmmaking – including more realistic portrayals of men and women opposed to the ideal images of the 50s and 60s – the men performing this ideal masculinity are flawed and continue to be so at the conclusion of the films. The anti-heroes, lower middle class men coping with the dire economic situation and aiming for a 'better' lifestyle and financial security, are equally flawed. Their patriarchal control is under threat, unable to live up to their work ethic as providers or to take care of their family. Their central role at home and in public is scrutinized, even more so in films made by female directors.

Throughout the history of the film industry, the concept of an 'ideal' masculinity, whether as secular, educated middle class in the 50s and 60s, as student and educated professional in the 70s or as providers and family men in the 80s and 90s, was never far away. The question was rather how the films dealt with the issue of a normative masculinity: was it portrayed positively as heroes and successful men, or negatively as an unattainable ideal? The films with female masculinities transgressed the spatial boundaries often associated with the feminine and the masculine, the domestic and the public respectively. The women impersonating the tough *ma'allima* were

nothing short of both masculine and feminine, practically simultaneously. Their roles as women were not denied to them, and their masculine performances were truthful and respected by their surroundings. These independent women do encounter difficulties, yet their financial independence also creates possibilities for them. As such, both class and patriarchy – in the form of structural discrimination of certain men and women in favor of others, both men and women – play important roles in the resulting position of power these women assert for themselves.

Women directors created other opportunities for the representation of men and women as of the 80s. Not necessarily in terms of new sex roles, women were already portrayed as mothers, working women, professionals and students, but more in terms of a truthful depiction of men and women in their respective roles while critically approaching women's position in the private sphere. The women were not ideal images of women, as often portrayed by actresses like Fatin Hamama, nor were the men per se ideals – no matter how often men had to be 'educated' into proper citizens in previous eras. Both men and women were portrayed more genuinely and the gender relations between them more equally. Further, women directors assert a female narrative voice, limiting the male narrative in their films and storylines. Yet, we have also seen that women's narratives were often the primary narrative in earlier films not necessarily only those made by female directors, limiting male agency, but also restricting women to mothering roles as sturdy and ideal bases on which the family's and the nation's foundations can be constructed.

To conclude, the most recent period in Egyptian filmmaking is witnessing a return to patriarchal domination; a paternalist ideal is reinstituted as a way of creating order in the country's chaos. Several actors, mainly Tamer Hosny and Ahmad al-Saqqa have made paternalism their trademark masculinity, controlling not only women but also younger men condescendingly. Tamer Hosny's 2013 song, with American rapper Snoop Dogg, entitled *Si Al Sayed* is representative of his masculinity: a controlling patriarch and misogynist, locking his girlfriend up in a room surrounded by windows, while he is having a

pool party with scantily clad women and his new 'pal', Snoop Dogg. Unfortunately, this song did not cause a stir similar to Robin Thicke's misogynist ode to rape, *Blurred Lines*, from the summer of 2013. Both Hosny's and al-Saqqa's masculine performances on the screen are riddled with violence and a continuous performance of their muscularity. The emphasis on their body, their muscles and (in the case of Hosny) machoism puts these men in a contradictory position. Their bodies are objects of desire, and homosocial bonding between the men is not uncommon, yet the desire falls safely within the constraints of "sites for the performance of masculinity" (Tasker 2002: 236). Next to the *si sayyid* 'modern patriarchs' is the *baltagi*, the unemployed lower class male in films from the last decade. The politics of representation of these young unemployed men, as burdens, or as drug addicted violent criminals, is suggestive of a discourse of '*balṭaga*' in Egypt's media as general framework to talk about lower class men.

Apart from the different types that Egyptian cinema has never failed to show us, and occasionally its scorn of hard-boiled masculinities favoring instead the soft-hearted educated professionals, the industry is influenced by and has contributed to popular images of an ideal, ahistorical interpretation of masculinity as a norm. We have seen how these ideals have changed over time, in their outer appearance, in their behavior or psychology. The differences are huge, pointing at the actual different possibilities for lived experiences of 'being a man' in Egypt. Yet, in the background there has always been a tacit approval of masculine domination, together with an expectation of men naturally inclined to lead. Certain traits are coded as masculine through their association with masculine performances – whether performed by men or women – resulting in the denunciation of certain other traits which are relegated to a private sphere, veiled as it were. I would not explain this in terms of shame, but rather as the result of a binary of masculine versus feminine mannerisms with each their own space in which they are meaningful. The figure of the *ma'allima* has been able to transgress the imagined public-private binary, pointing out the possibility for women (and men) to occupy both spaces simultaneously and successfully. Nevertheless, the assumption

remains that certain gender performances are expected in public or in private, depicted positively as ideal male and female behavior.

The future of representations of gender identities is sometimes depressingly negative, in such films as the Baltaxploitation-films with popular actor Muhammad Ramadan who has so far made several similar films and TV-serials set in lower class neighborhoods, impersonating a lower class unemployed character, the *baltagi*. His character, imbibed with violence and criminality, is not exactly an ideal type to look up to for young men and women alike. Yet, his popularity seems to indicate otherwise, in part due to his films' recognizable plot developments of a rebellious young man who was wronged by an unwelcoming class society looking down on him. Instead, the upheld ideal masculinity is impersonated by paternalist men, such as the Hosny's and al-Saqqa's, controlling the lives and whereabouts of others, an attitude veiled by their protective nature and their condescending knowledge of the dangers of society and what is good for their 'ignorant' inferiors, notably women and younger men.

Yet, other actors impersonate more positive images of men and masculinity, such as Khalid Abu al-Naga and Asir Yasin. Their performances are not limited to violence; instead they are men portraying respect and love for women without being controlling or paternalist. Since the revolution, their films have not reached high box office results, however, giving way for the Baltaxploitation-films instead. Furthermore, their films are not entirely void of a certain bourgeois arrogance towards what is deemed unwanted masculine behavior, often resulting in popular disapproval of their on-screen performances.

Simultaneously, the first years after the revolution saw productions such as *Hatuli Ragil/Get Me a Man* (Muhammad Shakir Khudayr 2013) in which an imaginary world of upside down gender relations was presented. Women took on roles of men in society, such as taxi drivers, police officers, and even criminal gang leaders. Men, on the other hand, were confined to the home and required to protect theirs and their family's honor. Another male character in the film was a prostitute. Apart from the stereotypical representations and roles for

men and women – reversed – the film offered the possibility to question the nature of men's and women's work, stating that in a parallel universe it might as well have been the other way around. But there is also some sort of nostalgia to a 'normal' gender order in the film, with a return to masculine domination and a proper, heteronormative, division of genders and sexualities. For example, in the fictive world of the film dominated by women, the resolutions to problems that pose themselves to the characters eventually lie in the hands of men who are able to heroically reclaim their masculinity.

The future for masculinities and men on the screen in Egypt lies unequivocally in the hands of young people. Some might be pessimistic about the prospect, quoting such paternalist types as portrayed by Tamer Hosny and, to a lesser extent, Ahmad al-Saqqa or Muhammad Ramadan, who also enjoys a rebellious air because of his young age. Personally I am less pessimistic, since the film industry has always shown relative leniency towards different representations while it has never failed to break taboos, however disguised it was at times. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the paternalist take in Egyptian media, from films to TV-serials and other mass media which have always referred to Egyptians as 'sons and daughters' of the nation. While official rhetoric claims to 'protect' the nation through images of a population at a loss and in need of decisive leadership, a different reading might be that of the rape of the nation. This allegorical rape by the different regimes and the army at the forefront – which occasionally turns real when certain army generals condone virginity checks – needs to stop and Egyptians must be allowed to take responsibility in their own hands without being fooled by such mediated images of protective, all-knowing men against a world full of dangers.

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Appendix 1: Nederlandse samenvatting

Onderzoek naar "mannen en mannelijkheden" in de Arabische regio is relatief beperkt, met slechts onregelmatig een interesse van onderzoekers voor dit onderwerp. Gender studies in het Midden-Oosten en Noord-Afrika blijven hoofdzakelijk aandacht besteden aan vrouwen. Desalniettemin wordt er onder 'gender' verstaan dat het over meer dan alleen vrouwen gaat. In de praktijk vinden we echter weinig terug over Egyptische en Arabische mannelijkheden en mannen.

Dit gebrek is deels te verklaren door de interessegebieden van de discipline van gender studies in de regio, een discipline die vooral interesse heeft in de sociale, economische en wettelijke kaders die genderrelaties bepalen in de regio. In deze zin besteedt ze dus vooral aandacht aan de discriminatie die vrouwen ondervinden, maar ook aan de positieve aspecten zoals vrouwen (en mannen) die proberen om gender relaties gelijker te maken, en formele en informele structuren opbouwen om veranderingen door te kunnen voeren. Een groot gebrek is de veronderstelling dat – gezien de regio zogezegd lijdt onder een strikt patriarchale maatschappij – mannen zich per definitie in een bevoordeelde positie bevinden. Deniz Kandiyoti (1994) heeft haar eigen veronderstellingen moeten bijstellen zodra ze aandacht begon te besteden aan mannelijkheden en mannen, met name in haar artikel *The Paradoxes of Masculinity*, waarin ze stelt dat patriarchale structuren een ongelijkheid creëren die ook invloed heeft op mannen en mannelijke identiteit. Bovendien kan men zich vragen stellen bij de definitie die aan patriarchie in de regio wordt gegeven, zoals Mervat Hatem (1987) heeft gedaan, en de bruikbaarheid ervan om sociale relaties te verklaren. Hatem argumenteert dat niet alleen patriarchie, verstaan als een systeem dat sommige mannen privileges geeft over vrouwen en andere mannen, maar ook klasse een belangrijk onderdeel zijn om de sociale structuur, waar genderrelaties onder vallen, te bestuderen en te deconstrueren.

Dankzij de ontwikkeling van men studies in de Angelsaksische wereld, en met name de theorie van hegemonische mannelijkheid van

Connell (1987), wordt er recentelijk ook meer aandacht besteed aan de ervaringen van mannen en de constructie van mannelijkheden op een globaal niveau en in specifiek niet-Westerse contexten. Door gebruik te maken van Connell en te erkennen dat mannelijkheid geen stabiele entiteit is of was, werp ik in deze studie licht op een van de lacunes binnen de studie van mannen in het Midden-Oosten en Noord-Afrika, namelijk over hoe mannelijke identiteit wordt geconstrueerd in populaire cultuur in Egypte, en meer specifiek in Egyptische cinema.

De hoofdvraag die mij bezighield aan het begin van het onderzoek was rechttoe rechtaan: hoe worden mannen afgebeeld in populaire Egyptische films? Deze vraag bracht echter een aantal belangrijke subvragen met zich mee, gerelateerd aan identiteit, nationaliteit, ethniciteit, gender, klasseverschillen, en generatieconflicten. In de loop van het onderzoek verschoof de aandacht ook steeds meer en meer van het 'hoe' naar het 'waarom', met aandacht voor diezelfde onderdelen die deel uitmaken van onze dagelijkse uitvoering, of 'performance' (Goffman 1990),[1] van onze identiteit. Vandaar dat dit onderzoek in de eerste plaats historisch is, om na te gaan hoe en waarom op bepaalde momenten in de recente geschiedenis van Egypte (sinds 1952) bepaalde types mannen en een bepaalde mannelijkheid – of mannelijkheden – in staat waren zich te ontwikkelen en een hegemonische positie in te nemen.

Maar we kunnen hegemonische mannelijkheden niet alleen beschouwen als iets dat zich in een vacuüm heeft kunnen ontwikkelen tot een zogenaamde essentie. Integendeel, hegemonie is niet iets dat we volledig in de hand hebben, maar eerder een resultaat van machtsrelaties die zich ontwikkeld hebben en die constant verschuiven en aangepast worden. In die zin kan hegemonische mannelijkheid tegenstrijdig zijn, zoals de ouder wordende leider die tegelijkertijd voordelen geniet als man en als leider, maar ook de gevolgen ondervindt van het ouder worden waarmee allerlei uitdagingen gepaard gaan. Hegemonische mannelijkheid is een abstracte entiteit en, zoals Connell (1987) ook stelt, in alle

1 Ik heb er voor gekozen om in de Nederlandse samenvatting ook het Engelse 'performance' te gebruiken gezien de Nederlandse vertaling (uitvoering) niet dezelfde betekenis met zich meedraagt.

waarschijnlijkheid niet eens de meest voorkomende vorm in de werkelijkheid. Bovendien kunnen er meer dan een hegemonische mannelijkheid tegelijkertijd bestaan in deze globale wereld, met lokale varianten of competitie tegenover de globale hegemonie van, bijvoorbeeld, businessmannen. De reële ervaringen van mannen kunnen zeer verschillend zijn van het ideaalbeeld dat hen voorgelegd wordt, een ideaalbeeld dat kan veranderen net zo goed als dat hoe mannen hun mannelijkheid beleven onderhevig is aan allerlei factoren.

In dit onderzoek heb ik dus ook rekening moeten houden met de context waarin de films werden en worden geproduceerd en geconsumeerd. Stuart Hall's *Representation* (1997) is een goed startpunt voor de studie van representaties en hoe betekenis wordt overgedragen, getransformeerd en gereproduceerd. Representatie, een Nederlandse vertaling van het Engelse *representation* brengt te veel onduidelijkheid met zich mee en legt te veel nadruk op degene die het uitvoert (in dit geval de filmindustrie zelf), is het proces waarbij een boodschap op een betekenisvolle manier wordt overgedragen en wordt begrepen (Hall 1997: 10). Hierdoor is het dus bijzonder belangrijk om de context waarin de films worden geproduceerd en geconsumeerd in de analyse te verwerken, aangezien films ook niet in een vacuüm worden geproduceerd, gecodificeerd en geconsumeerd.

Een essentieel onderdeel voor de analyse van mannelijke 'performances' in films is de studie van sterren (Dyer 1998). Sterren, zoals Dyer zegt, creëren verwachtingen in het publiek met hun specifieke en gekende 'performance', hun karaktertypes. Tegelijkertijd spreken sterren ons aan omdat ze ons op het gemak stellen door hun 'alledaagsheid' maar ook onze aandacht trekken met hun glamoureuze leven en hun 'performances' van ideale mannelijk- en vrouwelijkheid. Hierdoor nemen sterren een belangrijke plaats in in de studie van mannelijke 'performances' en brengen ze een hele resem aan betekenissen en kenmerken met zich mee. Bijgevolg bepalen ze ook hoe de betekenis van een mannelijke 'performance' wordt gecommuniceerd naar het publiek toe, hoe individuele kijkers er betekenis in lezen en hoe ze de publieksreacties beïnvloeden dankzij hun speciale status als "Ster".

De analyse van de films heeft aangetoond dat mannelijkheden in Egypte, zoals ze voorgesteld worden op het witte scherm door sterren, verre van eenzijdig zijn. De diversiteit in representaties op het scherm over de loop van de afgelopen decennia, maar ook binnen een bepaald tijdperk, en zelfs binnen een en dezelfde film, toont aan dat het concept 'mannelijkheid' helemaal niet zo stabiel is als het op het eerste gezicht lijkt. De verschillende paradigma's van mannelijkheden (Spicer 2001), culturele types die niet per se specifiek gebonden zijn aan een periode maar ook in aangepaste vorm kunnen terugkeren in latere periodes, zijn uitingen van mogelijke belevingen van een mannelijke identiteit.

Deze paradigma's vormen de basis van dit onderzoek waarrond de analyse is opgebouwd. Dat ik paradigma's gebruik betekent echter niet dat er geen ruimte is voor verschil binnen een paradigma; ook hier kunnen er verschillen te zien zijn al naargelang de specifieke en persoonlijke 'uitvoering' (performance) door de ster in kwestie en door het narratief, de interactie met andere acteurs en met de regisseur. De belangrijkste paradigma's die aan bod komen in het onderzoek, dat een tijdsspanne heeft van na 1952 tot ruwweg 2011, zijn de *ma'allim*, de nationale held, de 'overwonnen mannen', de consumptieman, de anti-held, de *futuwwa*, de rebel, en de 'nieuwe man'.[2] Daarnaast heb ik ook een paradigma van vrouwelijke mannelijkheid bestudeerd zoals die voorgesteld wordt in het type van de *ma'allima*. Een apart deel van het laatste hoofdstuk behandelt bovendien twee films van twee verschillende vrouwelijke regisseurs, met als doel vast te stellen hoe twee nieuwe 'pionieren' uit de jaren 80 man-vrouw relaties voorstellen.

Een rode draad die door het hele onderzoek loopt, is het feit dat, hoewel mannelijkheid verschillend kan uitgebeeld en geappreciëerd worden, er toch steeds een neiging is om mannen en een begrensd en ahistorisch mannelijk ideaalbeeld als essentie te beschouwen.

2 Voor sommige van de types hier heb ik gekozen voor een Arabische benaming, ook in het Nederlands (en in het verdere onderzoek). De *ma'allim* – de Egyptische uitspraak van het woord – is een titel voor een lagere klasse winkeleigenaar, handelaar, of zelfstandige. De *futuwwa* is een klassiek ideaalbeeld met verschillende invullingen van de betekenis ervan doorheen de jaren.

Sommige mannen kunnen hun gender identiteit gebagatelliseerd zien worden, terwijl anderen hun 'performance' als ideaal kunnen voorgesteld zien. Maar de essentie blijft bestaan, namelijk dat een man als een standvaste steun wordt gezien, gewoon in zijn hoedanigheid als deel uitmakend van de mannelijke sexe. Niet alleen dient een man standvast te zijn, het ideaal is ook heteronormatief. Afhankelijk van de periode waarin de films werden gemaakt, worden gender relaties tussen mannen en vrouwen verschillend afgebeeld. Maar een van de conclusies van het onderzoek is dat er van uitgegaan wordt dat er een essentieel verschil tussen mannen en vrouwen is en dat elk met een duidelijk afgebakend doel deel uitmaakt van de maatschappij.

Hoe deze maatschappij er dient uit te zien, is ook onderdeel van discussie in de analyses. Uit mijn onderzoek blijkt dat de films uit de eerste twee decennia na de onafhankelijkheid waren beïnvloed door en bijdroegen aan een officiële, modernistische retoriek en door een door de middenklasse geïnspireerd discours over hoe het nieuwe, moderne, Egypte er uit diende te zien. De latere decennia, en vooral sinds de oorlog van 1967, waren minder ideologisch beladen en stelden de vroegere positieve houding tegenover moderniteit, zoals die werd gedefiniëerd, in vraag. Wat de films echter niet in vraag stelden, waren de 'codes of modernity' (Armbrust 1995). Deze codes – antitheses van moderniteit en traditie, of van Westers kolonialisme en nationalisme die naar het einde van de film een emulgane synthese opleverden – bleven van toepassing om de wereld rondom zich te verklaren, uit te beelden, en de boodschap over te dragen aan een Egyptisch publiek. Vanaf de jaren 70 en vooral het daaropvolgende decennium zouden deze antitheses geen synthese meer bieden die een betere toekomst aankondigt. Vanaf '67 werden ze geproblematiseerd en bekritiseerd, maar maakten ze dus wel nog steeds deel uit van een cultureel 'systeem' om betekenis te creëren voor een publiek dat gewend was aan deze codes.

In recentere films spelen deze antitheses geen al te grote rol meer. Er worden af en toe nog postmoderne toespelingen op gemaakt, bijvoorbeeld door verwijzingen naar de grote iconen uit de 'klassieke' periode (de jaren 60) alsook door gebruik te maken van filmische genre conventies, maar daar blijft het bij. De verwijzingen naar deze

conventies en iconen staan in een postmoderne zin los van hun culturele en historische achtergrond. Bovendien hebben mannen ook weer een hegemonische positie bemachtigd, na de desastreuze jaren '70 die initieel gekenmerkt waren door het verlies in de oorlog van '67. Bijgevolg werden de oorzaken van dit verlies voor Arabische landen en regeringen besproken in films uit deze periode, met voorstellingen van een 'overwonnen mannelijkheid', doelloos en in crisis.

De jaren 80 vertoonden nog stuiptrekkingen van een mannelijkheid in crisis-discours, een discours dat ervan uitging dat een terugkeer naar morele waarden – belichaamd door een ideaal, maar menselijk manbeeld, de *futuwwa* zoals Nagib Mahfuz hem beschreef – stabiliteit met zich mee zou brengen. Tegelijkertijd merken we in de films van de jaren 80 ook de mythe, zoals Viola Shafik het beschreef, van de 'fat cats' (Shafik 2007), die de angst uitdrukte van de middenklasse voor de lagere klasses die de sociale ladder beklommen maar niet het cultureel kapitaal van de middenklasse met zich meebrachten.

De jaren 90 en vooral het eerste decennium van de 21e eeuw kenden een radicale terugkeer naar patriarchale normen waarbij mannen – en eigenlijk meestal één man geholpen door een mannelijke 'buddy' – het scherm vullen. Deze 'nieuwe mannen' zijn enkel nieuw in hun Westerse kledij en levensstijl, maar zijn de absolute tegenpool van gelijkheid. Daarnaast komt het beeld op van de rebelse, doch 'verloste' mannen, die, ondanks hun onderdrukte positie als lagere klasse, ook elementen bezitten van deze eeuwige mannelijkheid: ('de man' als) vasthoudend aan zijn woord, beschermend, voorziend. De tegenstrijdigheid in de beleving van hun mannelijke identiteit zit hem wederom in de twee concepten patriarchie en klasse. Als man kunnen ze met geweld hun positie innemen, maar als lagere klasse komt hun mannelijke identiteit in gevaar langs allerlei fronten, meer bepaald omdat ze als jongere en (occasioneel) als 'crimineel' afgebeeld worden als een probleem, wat ons dan weer tot de tweede conclusie brengt.

Een tweede belangrijke bevinding van dit onderzoek, is het concept 'crisis' en hoe het in elk decennium in een nieuwe vorm terugkomt. Mannelijkheid, afgebeeld als een norm, is een moeilijk, zo niet onmogelijk, te bereiken ideaal. Doorheen de jaren hebben de films dit ideaalbeeld verschillend afgebeeld, doch een aantal essentiële

kenmerken blijven terugkomen die voor de mannelijke protagonisten in de films steeds een soort van les is, die hun weg zoeken in de (fictieve) wereld en zo de perfecte balans proberen te vinden. Maar de crisis die ervaren wordt om hun mannelijkheid 'correct' te kunnen beleven – en dit is vooral het geval in films vanaf de jaren '70 – verlangt tegelijkertijd een soort veronderstelling van een mannelijke essentie.

Hoe deze ideale essentie wordt geïnterpreteerd en voorgesteld, hangt af van het tijdperk waarin de films zijn gemaakt. In de jaren 50 en 60 zijn dit vooral de opgeleide, zachte doch charismatische mannen. In de jaren 70 zijn dit de outdoorsmannen op zoek naar hun 'natuur' en mannen die vrouwen gelijk en met respect behandelen. In de jaren '80 grijpen filmmakers dan weer terug naar een vereeuwigd ideaal, de *futuwwa*, waarbij mannelijkheid ook geassocieerd wordt met geweld en controle en gezien wordt als een factor die stabiliteit kan brengen in een chaotische wereld. In de jaren 90 en vooral vanaf het nieuwe millenium zijn er nieuwe mannen bijgekomen die tegelijkertijd hip en trendy zijn, maar ook hun mannelijkheid vorm geven door een terugkeer naar een patriarchaal idealisme, zoals strikt mannelijke controle, geweld en een geveinsd respect voor vrouwen en kinderen (die doelbewust op één lijn worden gezet). Tegelijkertijd wordt de crisis die mannen beleven in deze recente periode voorgesteld als een crisis afkomstig van de maatschappij, een crisis die ze niet in handen hebben en enkel op lijken te kunnen lossen door een terugkeer naar een mannelijke essentie van kracht en geweld, hun lichamen als enige site waar ze nog zelf beslissingen over kunnen nemen.

De films in dit onderzoek hebben allemaal op hun eigen manier aangetoond dat een 'gender performance' geen eenzijdige, stabiele en biologisch geconditioneerde zaak is. Dat gezegd zijnde, een derde belangrijke bevinding in dit onderzoek is het feit dat het *concept* mannelijkheid gedefinieerd wordt in essentialistische termen. Het wordt beschouwd als een stabiele identiteit waar mannen (en in sommige gevallen vrouwen) naar zouden moeten streven. Mannelijkheid is positief, het creëert de illusie van stabiliteit en zekerheid, van veiligheid, individualiteit en onafhankelijkheid. Deze ideale mannelijkheid ligt echter niet zomaar voor het grijpen.

Integendeel, het is enkel beschikbaar voor de beste mannen, diegene die in staat zijn het strikte arbeidsregime rigoureus na te leven. Het is als een opgave, een zware taak die leidinggevende mannen op zich nemen. Dit kwam expliciet aan bod in de *futuwwa*-films, maar impliciet ook in eerdere en latere films, door de tegenstrijdigheden in mannelijke karakters en (fictieve) identiteiten bloot te stellen, weg te werken, en een nieuw ideaal voor te stellen.

Het laatste hoofdstuk van dit onderzoek is dan weer toegewijd aan vrouwelijke mannelijkheden, vrouwen die mannelijke kenmerken (in gedrag en eventueel kledij, niet per sé lichamelijk) vertonen. Halberstam (1998) heeft mannelijke 'performances' geanaliseerd zoals die door vrouwen worden uitgevoerd. Hij stelde de link in vraag tussen het mannelijke lichaam en zijn sociaal-politieke effect, waardoor impliciet verondersteld wordt dat mannelijkheid een gevolg is van 'man zijn'. Door vrouwelijke mannelijkheid te bestuderen, stelt Halberstam dat we inzicht kunnen krijgen in hoe mannelijkheid vorm wordt gegeven (ibid. 1). Het bekendste type in Egyptische films is de *ma'allima* die net zoals de *ma'allim* uit de lagere en werkende klasse komt, vaak ook een zelfstandige is, als eigenares van een winkel of een café. Uit de analyse blijkt dat ze een dubbele 'gender performance' kent, waarbij ze een mannelijke houding aanneemt wanneer ze zich bezig houdt met klanten of haar zaak, terwijl ze even goed een 'emphasized femininity' (Connell 1987) uitvoert wanneer ze zich alleen met haar man (of tijdelijke flirt) bevindt, de illusie creërend dat deze man toch nog enige positie bekleedt. Deze succesvolle dubbele 'performance' toont aan de ene kant aan dat mannelijkheid zeker geen privilege is van mannen alleen, maar aan de andere kant wordt er ook van uitgegaan dat een gerespecteerde publieke 'gender performance' in bepaalde situaties een imitatie moet zijn van wat algemeen aanschouwd wordt als 'mannelijk' en waaraan dus voorkeur wordt gegeven.

In het laatste hoofdstuk kijk ik ook naar films die door vrouwelijke regisseurs zijn gemaakt in de context van de commerciële filmindustrie in Egypte. In hun stijl en het gebruik van genre conventies verschillen de films niet van die van hun mannelijke collega's. In de manier waarop de narratieven zich ontwikkelen – en

dan rijst de vraag wiens standpunt de voorkeur krijgt – kunnen de films wel verschillen. Beide regisseurs die besproken worden, Inas al-Daghaydi en Nadia Hamza, geven hun vrouwelijke protagonistes een dominante narratief, en hierdoor beperken ze in essentie de mannelijke inbreng in de plot. De dominantie van mannen en mannelijkheid wordt zo in twijfel getrokken terwijl nieuwe mogelijkheden voor een vrouwelijke identiteit worden ontwikkeld. Een laatste conclusie van dit onderzoek, dankzij de films van deze vrouwelijke regisseurs, is dat mannelijkheid niet normatief *moet* zijn. Mannen en mannelijkheid worden hier voorgesteld als één van de vele mogelijkheden om een gender identiteit te beleven, als individu en niet als deel uitmakend van abstracte, ongedefinieerde groepen zoals 'mannen' en 'vrouwen'.

Tot slot wil ik er nog aan toe voegen dat dit onderzoek bijdraagt aan de groeiende discipline van Midden-Oosterse Media studies, een discipline die vooral ook in de Angelsaksische academia aan een opgang bezig is. Tegelijkertijd draagt het bij aan Gender studies in het algemeen en hoop ik dat het een waardevolle bijdrage kan zijn voor Men studies die vooralsnog beperkt zijn gebleven in deze regio. Dit onderzoek is de start, een eerste uitgebreidere kennismaking met hoe mannelijke identiteiten worden uitgebeeld in een populair massamedium uit de Arabische regio en kan dienen voor een verdere uitdieping van het complexe begrip identiteit en hoe die wordt vormgegeven. Meer bepaald dringen zich vragen op voor een verdere uitdieping van het discours rond crisis en hoe dit mannelijke identiteiten en de 'performance' van mannelijkheid (in de realiteit en op het scherm) beïnvloedt en vorm geeft.